



XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

Khyber's Children **Cabal of Shadows Faction Scenario #3** **An Adventure for 3rd Level Characters** **(Scaled for 2nd to 5th Levels of Play)**

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Sources: *Arms and Equipment Guide*, *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, *Lords of Madness*, *Spell Compendium*, *Stormwrack*

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Adventure Background

Aboleth slavers and their skum minions have long been a problem on the voyage to Stormreach. Their danger will soon become perfectly clear to the PCs. In *COS-1 The Sahuagin Stone*, members of the Cabal of Shadows ran afoul of a party of skum slavers. The PCs' contact in the region, a sahuagin named Dilmoolgha, identified the enemy and assisted in driving them off, warning the PCs what would happen to them should they ever be captured by the tainted creatures. In *COS-2 Shadows over Stormreach* the Cabal of Shadows dealt with the disembodied intelligence of a cloud giant named Deondag, and through this interaction learned the last known location of a psionic shard: a device used to store mental images of information. This device contained the thoughts of one of Deondag's clan mates regarding a portion of the *Caldyn Fragments* that dealt with the Mere of Shattered Souls. Believing themselves to be the only faction with any lead to controlling this portion of the Prophecy, the Cabal of Shadows has dispatched the PCs to recover the long-lost shard from the aboleth-haunted depths of the Thunder Sea.

Adventure Synopsis

Adventure Start: The adventure begins with the PCs meeting each other in their new headquarters, where they receive direction on the mission and the last-known location of the shard. Members of Obscura receive their secret orders at this time.

Part One: The PCs do legwork in Stormreach and prepare for their travels.

Part Two: The PCs board a ship and head into the Thunder Sea, where they meet with Dilmoolgha. He explains that the area the PCs are interested in is the province of Vullogthoth, an ancient aboleth. If they seek the shard, they have to travel into the heart of his domain.

Part Three: The PCs proceed into the briny deep using either potions provided by the Cabal or by activating their own abilities from a previous adventure. They are able to scout and locate areas of interest from the skum village, the ruins of a great ship, and a spire of rock that houses the aboleth.

Part Four: The PCs explore the sunken giant ship, now almost entirely covered by the shifting sands. In it they find it is now home to a creature of the deep that may be of help.

Part Five: The PCs investigate the skum village, despite the obvious overwhelming danger.

Part Six: The PCs explore the aboleth's lair, attempting to locate the shard while avoiding the dangers there. Skum and other strange creatures guard the way to the aboleth. Those that fight the aboleths have chosen poorly.

Ending the Adventure: The PCs manage to recover the shard before their magic runs out, and they flee back to the surface where their ship awaits.

Troubleshooting

Drowning: Much of this adventure occurs underwater. Should they become necessary, the drowning rules can be found on page 304 of the *DMG*.

Obscura: Some members of the Cabal of Shadows also belong to Obscura, sub-factions within the Cabal. The Obscura often have secret missions for their members, and this time is no different. Ask each player to hand you a note listing his or her Obscura, if any. All players should hand in a note, even if they are not a member of any Obscura in order to keep suspicions evenly spread throughout the party. Return the correct player handout to each player so they understand the details of their secret mission. This should be done immediately after the Adventure Start.

Time Keeping: Once the PCs dive toward their target, they are under a time limit. The magic that allows them to breathe runs out in ten to sixteen hours (depending upon the magic used), and once it is gone, they will die unless they are able to return to the surface. It is important that you keep careful track of the time once the PCs are underwater.

Adventure Start

As the adventure begins, the PCs are summoned to the Hand of Stalwart Reverie, liberated during COS-2 *Shadows Over Stormreach*. Only very recently have the members of the Cabal of Shadows been residing in this secret location, found inside one of the many giant monuments.

Living in the Hand of Stalwart Reverie has taken some getting used to, but the nightmare echoes are harmless and the giant-sized furniture is quickly being replaced with more reasonably sized furnishings. You have been summoned to the top of the Cabal of Shadows' new home, where you stand before a set of enormous double doors, waiting for leave to enter. As time passes, several other members of the Cabal gather.

As the PCs gather, give them an opportunity to introduce themselves and offer character descriptions. After the players have talked a few minutes, the metal doors swing open.

Around a sharp corner, three sides of the hall are filled with a forest of black pedestals of varying heights, but each is at least the height of two longswords. In the center, one pillar stands larger than the others. Each of the pillars bares a glass brain atop it. Standing before the central pillar is a robed and masked man, a sword at his side. A fine black cloak depicting the moons of Siberys eclipsing the sun trails from his shoulders as he steps forward to greet you. "Welcome friends. You know me as the Voice of the Storm, and this," he says gesturing to the glass cerebrum placed upon center pillar, "is Deondag, the Master of Rites, who some of you have already met. Now that we have come together in this fine place under the gaze of his tribe, it is time for him to relate what he has recently told the Council of the Obscured."

A faint light emanates from the glass brain as it rises from the pillar. A deep voice speaks in your mind with no sound. "There is a portion of the Caldyn Fragments that deals with the Mere of Shattered Souls. Indeed, during the time Dal Quor was terminus with our land, we thought that it might have been the great time of upheaval spoken of in the Fragments. I sent one of my minions to recover a shard, a psionic device with information encoded upon it, from one of the islands where it was rumored to have lain amidst ruins from the Demon Age. Sadly, after he recovered the shard, he was taken by the great aboleth that dwells in the bay. Such creatures live for many thousands of centuries, and the shard is made of crystal so the salt water would not harm it. It is likely that both still exist in the depths of the blue. I have told the Council when and where this occurred so that you may recover the shard and learn the secrets it holds."

"This is the vital mission the Council places in your capable hands," adds the Voice of the Storm. "Your efforts on behalf of the Cabal has been truly impressive, and we have faith that you will succeed without measure. I have contacted the Regvagu, and they have agreed to locate the wreck and send a guide to meet your ship. Your vessel leaves in eight hours. Prepare yourself for the epic quest at hand!"

The Voice of the Storm is willing to answer a few questions before he ushers the PCs toward their destiny. Use the following pieces of information, and that provided in the Adventure Background, to answer PC questions:

- The Cabal has booked passage on the *Heritage*. Captain Hallard and his crew have previously proven themselves capable of discretion (COS-1 *The Sahuagin Stone*). They are expecting the arrival of the PCs.
- Captain Hallard will take them to a place in the open sea where they will meet with a representative of a sahuagin clan called Regvagu, which has recently allied itself with the Cabal. The Council of the Obscured has already contacted them, and the sea devils have agreed to perform some preliminary scouting of the area where the wreck is believed to lie.
- The area where the giant ship is believed to be wrecked may be the domain of an ancient aboleth and its skum raiders. The aboleth and its minions take slaves from passing ships, including a recent attempt against the *Heritage* as it ferried minions of the Cabal from Sharn to Xen'drik.
- The Voice of the Storm has six *potions of water breathing* (each good for ten hours), which the PCs may use. Note that any PC who succeeded in COS-1 *The Sahuagin Stone* can cast *cloak of the sea* upon themselves, lasting sixteen hours. Due to the problems with module reporting and the online database, you are encouraged to accept the players' word as to whether they do or do not have the **Mark of the Regvagu** story object.
- The psionic shard is a tiny fragment of crystal imprinted with minuscule bits of psionic power. If the shard is touched, it telepathically whispers its command word into the mind of any living creature that handles it. If held and a command is projected, it will relay the information psionically imprinted onto it into the holder's mind, where it remains clear for one minute. Most shards disintegrate after use, so the PCs should not try to use it before returning to the Hand of Stalwart Reverie.

- The PCs have eight hours to prepare themselves however they see fit. If they wish, they may go into Stormreach in search of supplies or information. The travel time to meet with the sahuagin representative is approximately a day and a half.

Role-playing Members of the Council of the Obscured

The Voice of the Storm is one of the four individuals that sit upon the Council of the Obscured and make decisions for the Cabal of Shadows. All of them are old and powerful individuals whose goals exceed the daily concerns of normal folk. Their powers exceed anything the PCs may muster. When portraying them, it is important that they maintain an air of otherworldly mystery.

Voice of the Storm: The Voice of the Storm speaks for the Obscura known as the Defiance. A skilled leader and orator, the Voice has no fear of the coming darkness and he urges all to embrace it. He is prone to motivating speeches, filled with grandiose imagery. Among his fellows on the Council of the Obscured, the Voice of the Storm has urged frequent retribution against the Cabal's enemies. In general, though, he would rather see foes suffer than kill them quickly.

Part One: Preparations

Before the PCs leave for their journey, they may wish to make certain preparations, whether purchasing items or learning about the current happenings in the area of the aboleth's reputed lair. If the players are not inclined or time is limited, this encounter may be skipped.

Purchasing Equipment

If the PCs wish, they have the opportunity to purchase some items before going below. In Stormreach PCs can purchase items of 20,000 gp or less, including potions or scrolls of 5th-level or less. For use in this module, PCs can locate *scrolls* and *potions of endure elements* and *water breathing* for normal DMG prices instead of the campaign price. Note that items purchased in this manner do not refresh for other adventures like other consumables in the campaign. Of particular interest the following items can be easily found at several shops near the docks: air plant (25 gp, provides 5 minutes of breathable air), aquatic longbow (400 gp, 10' ft. range underwater) swimmer's kit (15 gp, +2 circumstance bonus to Swim checks) and tricorne hat (15 gp, looks very fancy).

NPC Spellcasting

It is possible that the PCs may seek NPCs to cast spells for them. Given the day-and-a-half travel time, spells to aid in underwater travel expire before the PCs arrive. However, should the PCs require other spells, such as divinations, they can locate Hes, the 7th-level adept they met in *COS-1 The Sahuagin Stone*. Finding Hes takes two hours, but once found, he is willing to cast any adept spell of second level or lower for normal prices. Some members of the Instruments of Change Obscura may have his favor (**Obscura Reward #1**; Cert ID EXCS01). In this case, Hes is willing to cast these spells free of charge, but for only those PCs with the favor. Others must pay.

A caster capable of casting higher-level spells who also offers some modicum of discretion cannot be found in the limited time the PCs have available.

Gathering Information

Before leaving for the Thunder Sea, some PCs might attempt to gather information about the aboleth on the streets of Stormreach. Feel free to role-play these brief encounters, or use the Gather Information skill as fits the temperament of the table. Those that role-play these encounters may receive any of the following information as the judge sees fit, based upon whom they speak with. For those rolling skill checks, PCs who seek out information on the docks or other places sailors frequent receive a +5 circumstance bonus to this roll. The PCs should receive an additional +1 to their check for every extra 10 gp they spend (up to +5 for 50 gp spent). Assume rolling Gather Information costs the PC 3d4 gp in drinks and bribes and takes three hours. Depending on whom the PCs specifically approach, the DM may also allow Bluff or Diplomacy checks with certain NPCs. PCs receive all information for the DCs they beat with their check.

- DC 5: *"All kinds of monsters are a constant threat in the Straights of Shargon. I guess anything is possible."*
- DC 15: *"I heard that those big squiggly tentacle things capture people and turn 'em into fishmen with a touch."*
- DC 20: *"I seen what you're talking about. I was on a merchant trader outta Zarash'ak when the fishmen called skum snuck aboard. They managed to wrangle a few of my friends over the side"*

where something huge pulled them below. I felt something touch my mind before I pulled free and fought clear. We lost a dozen good men, but I can't help but feel we were lucky. Whatever it was that tried to control my thoughts was unholy and alien and the touch of its thoughts leaves me feeling unclean to this day."

Knowledge Skills

Those PCs with Bardic Knowledge, Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) may attempt a skill check to know information about the aboleth of the Thunder Sea.

- DC 5: Skum raiding parties sent by aboleth slavers are a constant danger in the Straights of Shargon.
- DC 15: Old stories claim that an ancient aboleth has laired amongst the Teeth of Shargon and has directed its skum minions to gather sailors as slaves. Some old sailors call it the "Catcher in the Deep."
- DC 20: The aboleth known as the "Catcher in the Deep" is actually properly named Vulogthoth, an ancient aboleth who is the reputed master of an entire aboleth city believed to be at the bottom of the Thunder Sea.

Once the PCs prepared themselves and are ready to leave on the *Heritage*, proceed with Part Two.

Part Two: Old Friends

At the Heritage

It is a fine day as you board the Heritage; the arms of her mermaid figurehead are draped back along the sides and her soarwood skids sit lightly in the water. Captain Hallard greets you warmly and offers you a spacious cabin below decks before he takes the helm and directs the ship out of dock. With a crack of lightning, a great gust of wind surges forth from the elemental wall of mist and fills the sails. The ship rapidly picks up speed.

Once the PCs are ready to depart, they make their way to the *Heritage* anchored at the docks. Captain Hallard heartily greets those he has met before and welcomes them to take their previous cabin. In short order, the ship is underway and sails steadily north into open water and toward the Teeth of Shargon. Eighteen hours pass until the ship slows to meet their guide, so the PCs have one night to rest and prepare.

The Heritage

The *Heritage* is similar to a traditional wind-powered vessel, but it has only a rudimentary mast and sails. On the aft deck, a large tower holds a massive ring of moving air that trails the boat, propelling it forward. The hull of a wind galleon does not fully rest in the water, being supported instead by two long, fin-like structures that sit on the surface. The *Heritage's* hull is crafted partially from lighter-than-air soarwood with a mermaid painted along the prow, her arms draped backward along the sides.

Heritage: Colossal vehicle; Seaworthiness +4; Ship handling +3; Speed 100 ft. (perfect); 480 miles/day; Overall AC -3; Hull sections 80 (sink 20 sections); Section hp 60 (hardness 5), Section AC 3; Ram 6d6; Space 90 ft. by 30 ft.; Height 30 ft. (draft 0 ft.); Watch 7; Complement 30; Cargo 150 tons.

Crew Member CR 1/2

Male or female half-elf expert 1

N Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +2; **Senses** Low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common, Elven, Undercommon

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

hp 5 (1 HD)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2; +2 against Enchantment effects

Immune sleep effects

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee short sword +2 (1d6+2/19-20)

Ranged javelin +2 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Skill Focus (Profession [sailor])

Skills Balance +6, Climb +6, Profession (sailor) +7, Survival +4, Swim +6, Tumble +6, Use Rope +6

Possessions short sword, two javelins, leather armor, a faded bandana

Description A tanned seadog, with a few days of stubble.

Hook "Right away, Sir!"

Captain Hallard CR 1

Male human expert 2

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Elven

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13

hp 10 (2 HD)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +3 (1d6+2/18-20)

Ranged javelin +3 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession [sailor])

Skills Balance +8, Climb +6 (+8 with ropes), Jump +3, Profession (sailor) +8, Survival +5, Swim +10, Tumble +6, Use Rope +6

Possessions rapier, two javelins, studded leather armor, tricorner hat, gold earring, *ring of swimming*

Description A tall, plain man in fancy dress.

Hook "Avast you swabs! Put your backs into it or you'll be swimming home!"

Swimming with Shark Men

"All Stop!" Captain Hallard shouts above the spray of the morning sea, and in mere seconds, the Heritage ceases its movement. Reaching into his pocket, the human captain removes a small stone bedecked with holes and indentations, which he momentarily examines before dropping it into the water. Noting your interest in his actions, he turns toward you. "Now we wait. Our guide should be along shortly. " No sooner that the Captain turns back toward the water, there is a splash, and a great clawed hand of webbed fingers reaches over the rail. A wide smile of jagged teeth is not far behind.

It's very early in the morning when the ship stops to summon their sahuagin guide. Few of the crew are active. Only the PCs, Captain Hallard, and seven of the crew are on deck to witness the arrival of the sahuagin Dilmoolgha. After brief and surprisingly simple negotiations between the sea devil and captain, the sahuagin approaches the PCs.

Those who have played *COS-1 The Sahuagin Stone* recognize Dilmoolgha as the sahuagin who posed as a guide for the *Heritage* when they first came to Stormreach and forged an alliance with his clan.

The sea devil approaches and in a quiet, ritualized greeting offers one claw toward you, palm upward. "Greetings to you, Children of Shadow. I am Dilmoolgha of the Regvagu. You will speak with me now. " His jagged smile makes you certain he does not mean it as an offer, but rather a command.

The sahuagin is confident in his ability and strength. He believes the air-breathers are an inferior species, but as followers of the True Gods (the Dark Six), they may be worthy allies and tools that might be used by Clan Regvagu against its enemies. Since his clan recently made an alliance with the Cabal of Shadows, he treats the PCs with less disdain than normal. Dilmoolgha prefers to speak in Sahuagin or Aquan, but realizes the PCs are inferior creatures and lowers himself to speak Common if necessary. Anyone who can speak Sahuagin or Aquan greatly impresses him, and he takes an instantly liking to him or her. Regardless of the language used, he imparts the following pieces of information as he treats with the party:

- The sahuagin of Clan Regvagu are devoted followers of Shargon, the deity that the air-breathers call the Devourer. Shargon guides the priests of his clan by speaking to them through an artifact called the *ebon tableau*, which other members of the Cabal returned to them recently. This action

proved they were worthy of an alliance, and Clan Regvagu has chosen to repay their debt by aiding the Cabal in this task.

- Dilmooolgha has already located the general area based upon the information provided to his clan by the Cabal. Sahuagin warriors found the ruins on the island where they were supposed to be, but time and storms had scoured away details that may have been useful.
- Following the directions given by Deondag, the Master of Rites, the sahuagin performed a wide search between the isle and Stormreach and eventually located the skum village and the lair of the aboleth the Cabal seeks.
- Dilmooolgha has scouted the area himself and can lead Captain Hallard to the seas above it. The sahuagin believes it took about an hour to swim down to the bottom. Once there, he was able to locate three areas of interest. The first is a ruined ship sized for creatures much larger than a sahuagin or human. The wreck is largely buried beneath the sand and is a great distance from the rest of the habitation. The second place of interest is a large village or small town that is lit by many lights where many skum were seen. Dilmooolgha could not get very close to it for fear of being seen and overwhelmed by the vastly superior forces. He recommends the PCs avoid the village if they can. The third place is a great rock spire that seemed guarded by a handful of skum. While observing, he witnessed a great dark shape that looked much like a giant fish with tentacles swim inside. He also does not think this place is safe, but given the few guards, it is possible that the PCs may be able to enter by stealth. He does suggest that the PCs avoid any large concentration of skum, as they are likely to guard at least one aboleth.
- Each of the three areas forms the point of a rough triangle and the PCs should be able to stealthy swim from one to another in approximately ten minutes.
- Dilmooolgha does not plan to travel down to the aboleth's lair with the PCs, but he will remain with the ship until the PCs have returned or it seems unlikely that will ever return.

Once the PCs have asked all the questions they can think of, Dilmooolgha guides the captain to the surface above the aboleth's domain. The ship arrives there four hours later in the late morning.

Part Three: The Dive

It is nearly midday when the heritage again comes to a stop. Dilmooolgha waves you over the side, "This is the place you seek. The wreck is directly below the surface here. There is great danger here. I will wait one day for you. After that, you must be dead and we will leave before we are discovered. May Shargon spare you his appetite and give you one more day to slaughter your foes."

There is nothing left to do but swim to the bottom.

Dilmooolgha is well aware of the danger posed by sitting aboard an unmoving ship in the aboleth's waters, and nothing the PCs can say can convince him to wait longer than a day for their return. Indeed the last thing the sahuagin mentions to the PCs is to avoid contact with aboleths at all costs, as they steal your mind and make you their slave with but a glance. If they see an aboleth, it might see them, and he encourages the PCs to run away.

Captain Hallard, however, is more flexible. Any PC who succeeds on a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, or pays him a bribe of 100 gp, can convince the good captain to risk the lives of his crew for an extra half day (12 hours). Beyond that, he leaves regardless of whatever promises the PCs might extract from him.

It takes the PCs thirty minutes to swim to the ocean bottom, where they arrive in the vicinity of the wreck, though they can see the spire and the village in the distance due to its many light sources. If the PCs have any members with a base speed of 20 feet per move, it requires forty-five minutes to make the swim. If you have not yet already explained the details of the deep water, do so now.

Nothing moves near you amidst the kelp and coral. The ruin of the giant ship is nearby, reaching out from the sands in the darkness of the deep. Many lights and flitting shadows suggest an active nearby village or town to the right side of your view. A great spire lit by only a handful of lights rise to your left.

The PCs must now decide how to proceed. They may approach the sunken shipwreck, which is closest (Part Four), the skum village (Part Five), or the aboleth spire (Part Six). Remember to keep careful track of the time remaining before the water breathing magic expires.

Part Four: Sunken Ship

The easiest and perhaps most likely target for exploration is the sunken giant ship. Located a significant distance from both the skum town and the aboleth's lair, the PCs can approach it with little difficulty or fear of detection.

The great decaying vessel lies half buried in the shifting sands, only its huge construction keeps the wreck from being completely lost. Much of the impressive sailing vessel has rotted away, but a portion of the aft hold, supporting part of a mast, remains mostly enclosed. The vessel's bow protrudes from the sand nearly a hundred paces further into the gloom of the sea. Without substantial excavation, little else remains for your exploration.

As the PCs move to explore the wreck, they attract the attention of a pair of hungry sharks. The animals swim warily toward the PCs, preventing the sharks from gaining any surprise.

Large Sharks (2): 38 hp each; *Monster Manual* 279.

Tactics: The sharks are simple hunters who swim up to the nearest likely morsel and take a bite. Any violence towards them, or blood in the water, causes them to fly into a frenzy where they fight until dead, attacking the nearest foe.

Development: As the sharks approach, they start with an attitude of unfriendly. If a PC is able to successfully use wild empathy (DC 25), before the sharks attack or are attacked, to change their attitude to indifferent, the sharks swim on. The sharks are hungry and willing to attack humanoids because of the over-hunting of these waters by the skum. Any PC attempting wild empathy that offers the sharks meat gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this roll. The bonus rises to +4 if the meat is still alive when given to the sharks.

If the PCs are able to move the sharks' attitude to indifferent, and they are able to use *speak with animals*, the sharks can confirm the general layout of the village and spire. The sharks avoid both places, but especially the village, because the large numbers of skum often hunt the sharks.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters: Instead of both sharks being large sized, one is medium.

4th-Level Characters: Instead of both sharks being large sized, one is huge.

5th-Level Characters: Instead of both sharks being large sized, both are huge.

Exploring the Aft

If the PCs approach the aft section of the ship for a closer look, read or summarize the following text:

The aft hold shows significant signs of rot and decay, but considering its age, the densewood planks have held up extremely well; no doubt due to enchantments placed upon the vessel by giant shipwrights. The starboard side has a gaping hole that may have been cause of the ships descent to the bottom. If so, it was caused by the impact of a reef or some enormous creature.

The more-or-less intact rear of the vessel forms an area of approximately forty square feet. Broken crates and shattered supports litter the ground, making it difficult terrain for those walking. A DC 15 Search check confirms nothing of value is left in the hold. Those with the Investigate feat who succeed with the same Search check note every crate or holding area has been smashed open. This level of thorough destruction is unlikely with the sinking of a vessel, but more likely caused by a violent search.

Exploring the Bow

If the PCs approach the bow of the ship for a closer look, read or summarize the following:

A small hole provides access to that portion of the bow that remains intact and above the sand. The front of the vessel still sports a knob of the figurehead, though rot and the action of the sea have long since scoured away what it depicted.

The inside of the bow is a rough triangle, thirty feet to a side, with a sandy bottom and the front of the boat forming the ceiling of the makeshift room. As the PCs enter, they see they are not alone. This space has been done up as a crude bedroom. A hammock made of solid seaweed hangs at the point opposite the hatch, and an intact crate has been pulled nearby to serve as a table. A creature that looks like a combination of fish and man with great bulbous eyes and a muscular tail tries to hide unsuccessfully behind the crate. It looks like the other skum some PCs may have encountered, but its head is much larger and there is a greater sense of intelligence glittering in the eyes.

Creature: When it becomes clear the PCs have noticed him, Eihoom raises his claws above his head in a non-threatening manner and stands up, hoping to speak with the party and avoid combat. Eihoom was one of the skum selected by the aboleths for experimentation, and in the process he developed intelligence not normally found among his people. With that intelligence came fear for his own life, and Eihoom realized that his cowardice exceeded his slavish devotion to his aboleth masters. With this realization, Eihoom fled the town, but he didn't know where to go, so he settled in the nearby shipwreck to pray, hoping the Dragon Below would send some sign of what to do. Fortunately, he believes the PCs to be that sign, and he hopes that if he helps them, they may take him with them to wherever they came from, as long as it is far from the aboleths.

Eihoom: male phrenic skum; hp 11, see Combat Statistics.

Tactics: When the PCs enter, Eihoom has activated his *defensive precognition* and *force screen* in case of attack. If forced into melee, he swims five feet up so he can use his rakes and expends his psionic focus to activate *psionic fist* on his first bite attack. If escape looks possible, he takes it at the first opportunity. Eihoom does not want to fight but does not want to die either.

If the PCs do not attack him, he offers any of the information below in halting Common:

- Eihoom can explain his back story, as given above. He knows that many of the skum have been experimented upon and changed in different ways. Several have evolved like him and developed mental powers.
- Eihoom does not remember his life before being transformed into a skum, but he knows that the Great Maker Vulgothoth and his brood often direct their skum slaves to capture sailors that come close to their waters so that the ranks of the skum may be expanded.
- Some of those skum who have been experimented upon have come to worship the Dragon Below. While the aboleths do not worship Khyber, they allow the skum to worship, as it helps keep the population docile. The skum have built a temple to the Dragon Below in the skum village.
- In addition to the priests, the skum are lead by a chieftain called Bak. He has gifts similar to Eihoom, but due to his devotion, the Great Maker has performed further experiments upon Bak, making him more powerful.
- In addition to the Great Maker Vulgothoth, Eihoom knows several other aboleths exist in the area. Vulgothoth is by far the largest and, therefore, the oldest.
- The giant shipwreck is well known to the skum and their aboleth masters. Anything valuable aboard the wreck was taken inside the aboleth's spire to their treasure horde long ago. He can pinpoint where the trove is.
- Anything the PCs tell Eihoom about the Cabal of Shadows is more than enough to sway him and encourage his alliance with their organization. Eihoom is too afraid to go inside the spire, but he greatly wants the PCs to take him away with them when they leave. As a sign of his friendship, he is willing to draw a map in the sand of what he remembers of the inside of the spire (see Appendix Two). He also makes some notes of guards or other dangers. He encourages the PCs to avoid the skum village, as the skum would likely attack the PCs on sight, and they vastly outnumber the party.
- Eihoom does not, under any circumstances, approach the skum village or the aboleth spire. Those that still dwell there know him, and they would attack him with lethal force immediately. He would fight to the death here rather than be recaptured and enslaved.
- If the PCs wish, Eihoom offers his home as a safe place to rest should they require it and have the means to survive underwater for that long.

Eihoom CR 3

Male phrenic skum

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan, Common

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

hp 11 (2 HD)

SR 12

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +5 (2d6+4) and 2 claws +0 (1d4+2) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +0 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +5

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 2nd):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+1 insight bonus to AC & saves; 2 min.)

1/day – *force screen* (+4 shield bonus to AC; 2 min.)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP)

Feats Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack)

Skills Concentration +3, Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Hook “Please, no hurt Eihoom. Eihoom friend!”

After investigating the shipwreck, the PCs are free to proceed to the skum village (Part Five) or the aboleth spire (Part Six).

Part Five: Home, Slimy Home

Even from a distance, it is obvious the skum village is filled with activity. Strange lights and shadows move about the nauseating undersea architecture as creatures come and go. Eihoom, if he has been encountered already, strongly suggests against investigating the skum village but does not stop the PCs if they approach.

The skum village is made of coral and stone with strange rounded edges and buildings whose tops are larger than their bases. Eerie purple and green lights blossom from nauseating sculptures or free-floating water plants. In the center of the village, a large statue depicting a fiendish-looking dragon perches upon some sort of temple. Even from a distance, it is clear from the shadows there are skum everywhere, building more housing or going about daily chores for their masters. Here and there, much bigger silhouettes suggest that the skum are not alone in the village.

It is impossible to predict how the PCs might try to investigate the skum village, so you must adjudicate based on the PCs' plans. There is nothing in the skum village for the PCs beyond danger, as the shard is in the aboleth spire. Curious PCs likely get themselves killed, though stealthy or creative PCs may be able to investigate the village for a short time.

The exterior of the village is patrolled by six patrols of three skum each, each led by a phrenic skum (see the Combat Statistics in Part Six). If the PCs make themselves obvious by starting a fight, the patrols all converge on the site of the battle as quickly as possible (each arriving in 1d6+2 rounds). In addition to the patrols, there are approximately fifty additional skum working in the village with two normal aboleths and three adepts of the Dragon Below that staff the temple. The aboleths and the adepts (see Combat Statistics in Part Six) arrive ten rounds after any disturbance.

Below are a few buildings that might interest the PCs. Exploring or infiltrating the skum village might make a good DM's Mark. The DM is encouraged to place these buildings as he or she sees fit.

Temple of the Dragon Below: At the center of the village is a great temple, big enough to have been built by the giants of old. It is decorated in relief carvings of tentacles, fanged maws, and randomly placed bulging eyes. The shifting purple and green lights make it look as if the surface of the temple is wriggling. Atop the temple is a great sculpture of the Dragon Below—with decidedly fish-like traits. Inside there are always at least three skum adepts ministering to the flock.

Prisoners: These buildings house recently captured sailors inside a bubble of magically contained air. It is the only place in the village where air breathers can safely be held. The walls of the holding cells are inlaid with bilestone (see the Melted Tower below). At any given time, there are 3d4 sailors in each of these holding areas waiting to be turned into skum or used to augment the food supply.

Skum Pits: These spiral-shaped building have large holes at their apexes where the skum can swim down through. Inside each of the conch shell shaped buildings is a yawning pit in the sandy floor that the skum use as a communal bed.

Farms: Spread around the edges of the community are kelp fields and great cages of swimming fish; both cultivated to feed the needs of the village and their aboleth masters.

Melted Tower: A great tower that looks as if it is melting overshadows the statue of Khyber to a height of nearly three hundred feet. Several holes pierce the melted tower, and the water moves through it creating strange whistling or groaning noises that resonate throughout all of the village. The melted tower is made of bilestone, looking much like melted obsidian that is greasy and warm to the touch. Bilestone has a debilitating affect on non-aboleth minds (including skum) approaching with 30 feet of the melted tower. They suffer a –2 penalty on all saving throws against mind-affecting spells and abilities and on all Wisdom-based skill checks made while in proximity to the bilestone.

Part Six: Spire of the Great Maker

When the party is ready to investigate the great plinth of rock that is home to the aboleths, they may approach either entrance (Locations 1 and 12). Each location within the complex is numbered on the map in Appendix One and is further detailed below. Unless otherwise noted, the following details are constant throughout the complex.

Ceilings: The ceiling in each cavern rises to a height of thirty feet, providing ample room for three-dimensional combat. Every room is filled completely with water.

Exterior and Interior Stone Walls: The walls are all unworked stone, shaped only rarely by magic; per 5 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 900; AC 5; Break DC 65.

Interior Stone Doors: 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; AC 5; Break DC 28. The spire has no exterior doors.

Light: Unless otherwise listed, all rooms are under the effects of numerous *light* spells that give the entire spire a diffuse purple or green glow. The lighting is subdued and shadows are easily cast, providing many opportunities for hiding.

Magic: Besides the *light* (faint evocation) spells found in each room, the entire spire is infected with thin veins of bilestone. This causes all non-aboleth minds inside the complex (including skum) to suffer a –2 penalty on all saving throws against mind-affecting spells and abilities and on all Wisdom-based skill checks. Unless otherwise noted, the thin veins in the walls of most rooms are not substantial enough to mine without significant and time-consuming effort.

1. Skum's Entrance (EL 4)

The top of the spire opens to a tall fluted passage where two fishmen stand guard. The opening is wide enough that the two could easily swim through together. A faint green light shines off the sides of the elongated walls, looking as if some sea-born beast was reaching toward the guards with a tentacle from the deep.

Creatures: Those skum important enough to serve in the aboleths' household are forced to swim to the top of the spire before entering. As this entrance, a spiraling ten-foot wide tube, leads to the skum warrens, fewer guards are posted here. There is no bilestone here.

Skum (2): hp 15, 11; *Monster Manual* 28.

Tactics: The skum are not expecting any sort of attack, so they are not particularly attentive to their duties (–2 to Listen and Spot checks to avoid surprise). If they are given the opportunity to respond, one skum tries to hold the passageway while the other swims into the structure calling for help (note that underwater the penalty to Listen checks for distance is only –1 per 30 feet). If possible, the skum tries to reach and bring back the other skum in Room 2. Both skum are utter slaves to the aboleths below and fight to the death.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters: Both skum have 11 hp and take a –4 to Listen and Spot checks to avoid surprise.

4th-Level Characters: One of the skum is a phrenic skum (see below).

5th-Level Characters: Both of the skum are phrenic skum (see below).

2. Skum Lair (EL 5)

Tentacle-like coral formations reach out from the sides of this chamber, where a mix of purple and green lighting swirl in the water. Gutted fish are strung from a line to the northwest, giving the room a coppery taste as they drip blood into the water. Depressions in the walls suggest sleeping areas, and the room is litter with the debris of life.

Those skum on regular duty spend their free time resting here. Three skum are lounging when the PCs arrive. The door to this room from Location 1 is not locked.

Skum (2): hp 15, 11, 10; *Monster Manual* 28.

Tactics: If the spire is invaded, the skum try to hold the intruders to this room and are especially protective of the passageway leading to Location 4 and the hatchery beyond. They also try to use their swim speed to their advantage, taking higher ground and making use of rake attacks. If possible, they try to concentrate attacks on one PC so their aboleth masters have less danger to deal with. Due to their enslavement, the skum willingly throw away their lives if it is of the slightest benefit to an aboleth.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters: There are only two skum.

4th-Level Characters: There are four skum.

5th-Level Characters: There are six skum.

3. Chieftain's Lair (EL 6)

A great shell bed lined with seaweed dominates this room. The walls are covered in carvings of fishmen worshiping at great cracks or trenches in the ocean floor. From these holes, blasphemous tentacles reach up and drag the supplicants down to their death.

The most powerful of the skum, Bak, has been repeatedly experimented upon by the aboleths below. His "gifts" and frequent interaction with the Great Maker have made him popular among the other slavish skum, who listen to his every command. This has stirred Bak to even greater heights of devotion, and since Eihoon fled, he is constantly on the lookout for independent thinking among the phrenic skum. It is ironic that because of his faith in the Dragon Below and the aboleths as his avatars, he does not recognize his own growing independence.

Bak, Skum Chieftain: male phrenic skum, hp 33, see Combat Statistics.

Tactics: Bak has been commanded by the aboleths to ensure the sanctity of the tower by eliminating all non-sanctioned life. This means any creation that is not skum, aboleth, or the gibbering moulder in Location 5 is considered food and must be slain for the glory of Khyber's emissary, the Great Maker Vulgothoth. If Bak is aware of nearby combat, he manifests defensive powers if given time: *force screen*, *vigor*, *biofeedback*, and *defensive precognition*, in that order. He then moves to melee using *adrenaline boost* (if he still has PP) and Psionic Fist (on his bite attack). He only uses offensive powers such as *mind thrust* or *brain lock* if he can see the combat but cannot get to it for some reason.

Treasure: Bak carries much of the treasure given over to the skum on his person. If the PCs defeat Bak, they may claim his sharkskin armor and *amulet of mighty fists* +1.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters: Use the CR 5 version of Bak.

4th-Level Characters: Use the CR 8 version of Bak.

5th-Level Characters: Use the CR 9 version of Bak.

Bak, Skum Chieftain CR 5

Male phrenic skum psychic warrior 2

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

hp 27 (4 HD)

SR 14

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +9 (2d6+6) and 2 claws +6 (1d4+3) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +6 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +7

Power Points/Day: 3; **Powers Known** (ML 2nd):

1st—*adrenaline boost* (1 PP, swift action, gain +2 Str and Dex for 1 round), *vigor* (1 PP, gain +5 hp per PP spent, 3 min.)

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 4th):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+2 insight bonus to AC & saves; 4 min.), *empty mind* (immediate action, +3 bonus to Will saves to next action), *mind thrust* (35 ft., 4d10 damage, DC 13 Will negates)

1/day – *force screen* (+4 shield bonus to AC; 4 min.)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP),

Feats Multiattack, Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack), Psionic Meditation (regain psionic focus as a move action/DC 20 Conc. check), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Autohynosis +2, Concentration +8, Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Possessions sharkskin armor, *amulet of mighty fists* +1

Hook “I am forged of the Great Maker, you are inferior and must die.”

Bak, Skum Chieftain CR 6

Male phrenic skum psychic warrior 3

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

hp 33 (5 HD)

SR 15

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +10 (2d6+6) and 2 claws +7 (1d4+3) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +7 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +8

Power Points/Day: 5; **Powers Known** (ML 3rd):

1st—*adrenaline boost* (1 PP, swift action, gain +2 Str and Dex for 1 round), *biofeedback* (1 PP, DR 2/-, 3 min.), *vigor* (gain +5 hp per PP spent, 3 min.)

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 5th):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+2 insight bonus to AC & saves; 5 min.), *empty mind* (immediate action, +4 bonus to Will saves to next action), *mind thrust* (35 ft., 5d10 damage, DC 14 Will negates)

1/day – *body adjustment* (cure 1d12, self only), *brain lock* (150 ft., animal, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast or monstrous humanoid is dazed for conc. +1 round, DC 13 Will negates), *force screen* (+5 shield bonus to AC; 5 min.)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP),

Feats Multiattack, Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack), Psionic Meditation (regain psionic focus as a move action/DC 20 Conc. check), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Autohynosis +4, Concentration +9, Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Possessions sharkskin armor, *amulet of mighty fists* +1

Hook “I am forged of the Great Maker, you are inferior and must die.”

Bak, Skum Chieftain CR 8

Male phrenic skum psychic warrior 4

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

hp 39 (6 HD)

SR 16

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +11 (2d6+6) and 2 claws +8 (1d4+3) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +8 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +9

Power Points/Day: 8; **Powers Known** (ML 4th):

2nd—*hustle* (3 PP, swift action, gain extra move action this round)

1st—*adrenaline boost* (1 PP, swift action, gain +2 Str and Dex for 1 round), *biofeedback* (1 PP, DR 2/-, 4 min.), *vigor* (gain +5 hp per PP spent, 4 min.)

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 6th):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+2 insight bonus to AC & saves; 6 min.), *empty mind* (immediate action, +4 bonus to Will saves to next action), *mind thrust* (40 ft., 6d10 damage, DC 14 Will negates)

1/day – *body adjustment* (cure 1d12, self only), *brain lock* (160 ft., animal, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast or monstrous humanoid is dazed for conc. +1 round, DC 13 Will negates), *force screen* (+5 shield bonus to AC; 6 min.)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP),

Feats Multiattack, Narrow Mind, Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack), Psionic Meditation (regain psionic focus as a move action/DC 20 Conc. check), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Autohypnosis +5, Concentration +10 (+14 to regain psionic focus), Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Possessions sharkskin armor, *amulet of mighty fists* +1

Hook “I am forged of the Great Maker, you are inferior and must die.”

Bak, Skum Chieftain CR 9

Male phrenic skum psychic warrior 5

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15

hp 52 (7 HD)

SR 17

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +11 (2d6+6) and 2 claws +8 (1d4+3) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +8 (1d6+3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +9

Power Points/Day: 10; **Powers Known** (ML 5th):

2nd—*dimension swap* (3 PP, switch places with any ally), *hustle* (3 PP, swift action, gain extra move action this round)

1st—*adrenaline boost* (1 PP, swift action, gain +2 Str and Dex for 1 round), *biofeedback* (1 PP, DR 2/- (or spend 4 PP for DR 3/-), 5 min.), *vigor* (gain +5 hp per PP spent, 5 min.)

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 7th):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+3 insight bonus to AC & saves (or +1 as a swift action); 7 min.), *empty mind* (immediate action, +5 bonus to Will saves to next action), *mind thrust* (40 ft., 7d10 damage, DC 15 Will negates)

1/day – *aversion* (foes moves 30 ft. from any type of object or creature chosen by manifester for 9 hours, DC 15 Will negates), *psionic blast* (30 ft. cone, stuns all creatures for 2 rounds, DC 14 Will negates), *body adjustment* (cure 2d12, self only), *brain lock* (170 ft., aberration, animal, dragon, elemental, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid or outsider is dazed for conc. +1 round, DC 13 Will negates), *force screen* (+5 shield bonus to AC; 7 min.)

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP),

Feats Multiattack, Narrow Mind, Psionic Body, Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack), Psionic Meditation (regain psionic focus as a move action/DC 20 Conc. check), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Autohypnosis +7, Concentration +11 (+15 to regain psionic focus), Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Possessions sharkskin armor, *amulet of mighty fists* +1

Hook “I am forged of the Great Maker; you are inferior and must die.”

4. Food Storage

Past the curtain of hanging fish lies what must be a larder. Dozens of rotting humanoid corpses hang from the ceiling by chains, further tainting the taste of the water. The waves cause them to sway back and forth as if the dead men danced for you, to a strange gibbering tune that you can barely make out.

The skum store food here. All of the corpses, twenty-seven in all, are dressed as sailors and show signs of having been gnawed upon by the skum. Some have died of their wounds during the raid they were taken in

(DC 15 Heal) but some show more despicable ruptures. All of the female sailors have gaping wounds in their abdomen as if something burst forth. A DC 17 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check confirms that skum can mate with female humanoids, but the young eat their way out.

A DC 5 Listen check confirms that someone or something is humming or singing a tuneless song from the next room. It sounds like it might be Common, but it makes no sense. This is the gibbering moulder nursemaid from the hatchery.

5. Hatchery (EL 5)

While the ceiling continues at the normal height, the floor descends the height of four men. At the bottom of the pit, seven translucent spheres pulsating with a soft pink light are mired in the coral, which grasps them like the tentacles of a squid. Several large black melted rocks anchor the coral. A mass of flesh, mouths, and eyes, flows over the spheres, stroking them with a malformed protrusion of skin and muttering dark whispers as someone might comfort a child.

The aboleths laid seven eggs in this chamber and sealed them to the floor with mucus. An aquatic gibbering moulder, a dark creature from the depths of Khyber, has been left as nursemaid. The moulder attacks anyone, including skum (but not aboleths), who approach the eggs. The room is 20 ft. below the lip of the entrance.

The melted black rocks in this chamber are bilestone. Any of the rocks would be sufficient for a member of the Defiance to meet their goals. Note that area of effect spells may destroy the eggs below, depending upon their placement, preventing any Instrument of Change PCs from recovering one.

Aquatic Gibbering Moulder: hp 42; see Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The gibbering moulder attacks any non-aboleth that approaches the eggs or attacks it from range. It does not leave this cavern, but instead returns to the pit if the party runs, dragging any unconscious PCs with it as a snack.

Deep Sea Gibbering Moulder CR 5

AL N Medium Aberration (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +9; darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common

AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18

hp 42 (4 HD); **DR** 5/bludgeoning

Immune Amorphous (cannot be flanked or suffer a critical hit)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +5

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), swim 20 ft.

Melee 6 bites +4 melee (1) and spittle +4 ranged touch (1d4 acid plus blindness)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Atk Options improved grab, swallow whole

Special Actions blood drain, gibbering, ground manipulation, spittle

Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 13

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Listen +4, Spot +9, Swim +8

Blood Drain (Ex): A swallowed opponent automatically takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round.

Gibbering (Su): As soon as a moulder spots something edible, it begins a constant gibbering as a free action. All creatures (other than moulthers) within a 60-foot spread must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or be affected as though by a *confusion* spell for 1d2 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion effect. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same gibbering moulder's gibbering for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ground Manipulation (Su): At will, as a standard action, a gibbering moulder can cause stone and earth in all adjacent squares to it to become a morass akin to quicksand. Softening earth, sand, or the like takes 1 round, while stone takes 2 rounds. Anyone other than the moulder in that area must take a move-equivalent action to avoid becoming mired (treat as being pinned).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a gibbering moulder must hit a Medium or smaller foe with a bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Spittle (Ex): As a free action every round, a gibbering moulder can fire a stream of spittle at one opponent within 30 feet. The moulder makes a ranged touch attack; if it hits, it deals 1d4 points of acid damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. Eyeless creatures are immune to the blinding effect but are still subject to the acid damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A gibbering moulder can attempt to swallow a grappled opponent of Medium or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. (The gibbering moulder doesn't actually "swallow" the opponent—it engulfs the victim within its amorphous form—but the effect is essentially the same.) Once the victim is inside, the gibbering moulder can use its blood drain ability. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by dealing 5 points of damage to the gibbering moulder (AC 19). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A gibbering moulder's body can hold 1 Medium, 2 Small, 8 Tiny, 32 Diminutive, or 128 Fine creatures.

6. Shrine to the Dragon Below (EL 5)

A stone and coral carving of a fishlike dragon, easily the size of four horses, dominates the rear of this chamber. A foul green light burns from its eyes, and a stream of bubbles float up from its fanged maw.

This room is used by Othuyegthoom, the high priest of the Dragon Below, to minister to those skum who delight in his worship. Othuyegthoom and an acolyte are here when the PCs arrive and, if alerted to intruders, move to assist immediately.

Skum Acolyte: hp 11; *Monster Manual* 28.

Othuyegthoom, Skum Priest: female skum adept 3, hp 26; see Combat Statistics.

Tactics: If confronted with battle, Othuyegthoom sends his acolyte to intercept any melee foes while he attempts to cast *bleed* on as many allies as possible. He then uses his spells to support the other skum, targeting difficult fighters with *cause fear* or healing allies with his wand. If he runs out of spell support, he joins the melee.

Scaling the Encounter

2nd-Level Characters: Remove the skum acolyte.

4th-Level Characters: Add a phrenic skum.

5th-Level Characters: Add a phrenic skum and a second skum priest.

Othuyegthoom, Skum Priest CR 4

Female skum adept 3

LE Medium aberration (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13

hp 26 (5 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +7 (2d6+5) and 2 claws +2 (1d4+2) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +2 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +7

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (5 charges)

Special Actions Madness Domain (1/day: add +1 to any Wisdom check, skill or Will saving throw)

Adept Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):

1st — *bleed*, *cause fear*^P (DC 11), *sleep*

0th — *cure minor wounds*, *guidance*, *touch of fatigue*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Dragon Below. Domains: Madness.

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 6

SQ amphibious

Feats Alertness

Skills Concentration +5, Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Knowledge Religion +1, Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spellcraft +1, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Possessions combat gear plus wooden holy symbol (2), *cloak of resistance* +1, *bracers of armor* +1

Hook *"You will feed the Dragon Below with the shreds of your flesh!"*

7. Offering Tunnel

Shells, rusted weapons, coins, rotted sacks, gems, and statuettes are piled waist high around a gaping pit that falls away into darkness. The walls protrude with dozens of large, bulbous stone eyes that watch you as you move through the cave.

This tunnel is used by the aboleths in the unlikely event that wish to come to visit the skum or spawn in the hatchery. The tunnel is 120 feet to the ceiling of the cave below. The skum pile all treasure and gear they acquire on their raids against the surface or sahuagin here, and much of it falls over the sides to area 8. While the carvings of eyes here are particularly lifelike, they are perfectly normal if but a little disturbing.

Treasure: Much of it has been ruined or destroyed by the salt water, or is otherwise of limited value (copper coins or handmade coral carvings). Among the one thousand pounds of "treasure," consisting mostly of small pieces of junk, are a few prize gems. A DC 25 Search check finds the most valuable pieces: a psionic *shard*, a silver necklace, a *potion of water breathing*, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and gold statuette depicting an aboleth.

8. Gates of the Maker (EL 4)

These wide stone double doors depict a massive aboleth swimming majestically through a reef of elongated coral. Strange swirls and carvings decorate the door.

In the cave whose ceiling leads up to Location 7, the PCs find more copper pieces, shells, and knick-knack offerings to the aboleth. A cursory search finds nothing of interest.

The gates of the maker separate the skum from their masters, and these doors remained locked at all times (DC 25 Open Locks). In addition to the lock, they are protected by a powerful aboleth glyph that affects all non-aboleths that approach the doors.

Aboleth Glyph of Enfeeblement: CR 4; magical; proximity trigger (non-aboleth life within 20 ft.); automatic reset (every minute); –6 penalty to Str, Dex, and Con for 1d4 rounds (DC 16 Will negates); 9th caster level; Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

9. Hall of Learning (EL 7)

Manacles decorate the walls, and a low table is placed in the center of this room. A skum lies upon the table, apparently sleeping while a huge tentacled fish pokes and prods him. The top of his head has been removed and lies on a nearby pedestal next to several strange curved blades.

The aboleths perform experiments upon skum and other unlucky creatures in this twisted laboratory. At the time the PCs arrive, one of Vulgoth's younger brood is researching a skum's brain, and he does not take kindly to being interrupted.

Foes: This fight is likely to overwhelm the PCs and is not intended to be a combat that they can win without being lucky or particularly powerful. Allow PCs to flee if they wish; the aboleth assumes its minions deal with the PCs.

Aboleth: hp 76 each; *Monster Manual* 8.

Tactics: If the PCs are foolish enough to engage the aboleth despite all the previous warnings, the aboleth starts by using a *hypnotic pattern* to limit the number of attackers and then focuses melee attacks on enemies. Any particularly difficult enemies will be the target of the creature's *enslave* ability.

If the aboleth is alerted to the sounds of combat from Location 12, it casts an *illusionary wall* over the entrance to Location 11 in order to decrease the likelihood that it is disturbed.

10. Aboleth's Lair (EL 11)

A sense of physical dread is obvious before you even view this room. A humming vibrates in your mind, causing intense pain as the room comes into focus. A huge formation of crystalline tentacles rise from the floor and pulse with a light both bright and dark at the same time. Between flashes of light you can make out four huge shadows of tentacle and scale swimming around the crystals. The light reflects off a line of eyes on each that betray a vast alien intelligence.

The crystal formation is the reason for the presence of the aboleth city; a powerful artifact crafted from a huge Khyber dragonshard. Using it, Vulgoth and his brood have been able to "improve" their skum and a host of other feats, including the creation of an extra-dimensional space where they live and do most of their work. Only aboleths can activate the ability to travel between dimensions. Should any PC Use Magic Device

to follow an aboleth to this place, they find themselves in the center of a vast underwater cyclopean city filled with many aboleths. If they do not return to the spire, the dark forces found there overwhelm them.

Foes: The shard also has a powerful narcotic effect upon the aboleths, and when not busy with other duties, the aboleths swim circles around the formation experiencing waves of pleasure that are painful to other races. Unless disturbed, the aboleths care nothing for the smaller races that might walk past their cavern, but if attacked or otherwise obstructed, their vengeance knows no bounds. This is not a fight the PCs should engage in unless they are particularly foolish.

Aboleth (4): hp 76 each; MM 8.

Tactics: The aboleths do not attack unless attacked first, but once they are, they simultaneously unleash *enslave* attacks against four members of the party hoping to drastically turn the odds in their favor. After the first round, one aboleth will use spell-like abilities to assist the other three as they move to melee. It is likely to be over quickly for the PCs. If any of the aboleths are in danger of death, they touch the crystal formation with one of their tentacles and transport themselves to their extra-dimensional lair.

11. Hall of Praise

The walls of this chamber are decorated with relief carvings of huge fish creatures with several giant eyes and a mass of tentacles being worshiped by smaller humanoid fishmen. In the background a great dragon watches over all.

A DC 5 Knowledge (religion) after examining the walls determines that the walls depict hundreds of skum worshiping aboleths as avatars of Khyber's will. This chamber is a monument to the aboleth's control over their slaves.

12. Aboleth's Entrance (EL 9)

Nearly a dozen of skum stand watch over this gaping hole in the side of the plinth. Strange coral formations that emulate grasping tentacles reach out from the side of the entrance, giving the impression of some hungry beast hoping to swallow all whom approach.

This is the primary entrance used by the aboleths. It is watched over at all times by a group of phrenic skum who stay constantly alert for danger due to the close proximity of their masters. There is no bilestone here.

Phrenic Skum (8): hp 11; Combat Statistics

Tactics: If aware of danger, one of the skum swims into the spire to alert the aboleth in Location 9 and then stays there to defend it. Two of the skum rush the majority of the PCs trying to tie up as many as possible while the other five activate their *force screen* psi-like ability. All of the phrenic skum activate their Psionic Fist feat on their first bite attack.

Phrenic Skum CR 3

Male or Female skum

LE Medium aberration (aquatic, psionic)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Spot +6 (+10 underwater); darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Aquan

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

hp 11 (2 HD)

SR 12

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); swim 40 ft.

Melee bite +5 (2d6+4) and 2 claws +0 (1d4+2) and (only while swimming) 2 rakes +0 (1d6+2)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +5

Psi-Like Abilities (ML 2nd):

3/day – *defensive precognition* (+1 insight bonus to AC & saves; 2 min.)

1/day – *force screen* (+4 shield bonus to AC; 2 min.)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ amphibious, naturally psionic (1 PP),

Feats Psionic Fist (expend psionic focus to add +2d6 damage to next natural attack)

Skills Concentration +3, Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +6 (+10 underwater), Move Silently +6, Spot +6 (+10 underwater), Swim +12

Hook “Die for the Maker!”

Ending the Adventure

Once the PCs have recovered the shard from Location 7, they are free, and wise, to return to the surface. Those PCs with ample time remaining on their *water breathing* may chose to explore further, and provided time remains in your game, you may indulge them; however, curious PCs may quickly find themselves in more than they can handle.

Once the PCs are ready to return to the surface, proceed with or summarize the appropriate text.

- If the PCs succeed in recovering the shard:

Nearing the surface, the Heritage is just where you left it. Your return is cause for much activity, as the crew gets under sail rapidly to outdistance any pursuit. A day and a half later, you have returned to Stormreach and stand once again in the Hand of Stalwart Reverie. A host of scribes stand at the ready to record the details of the recovered shard. The Voice of the Storm looks you over before activating the crystal, “Stay and witness what you have wrought, for soon you may visit the Mere of Shattered Souls in the name of the Cabal.” With that he grasps the shard and begins to move his lips... “In a place where mists kiss shadows, the lady of twilight laments. Her tears are pearls of envy; her sigh is a breath of hate. Mend the soul shattered, bring pure water to the Mere, and herald the divided regent when the moons are bright, blue, and light.”

If any PC successfully returned with any bilestone, all of the PCs receive the **Bilestone Powder** story object.

- If the PCs fail to recover the shard:

Nearing the surface, the Heritage is just where you left it. Your return is cause for much activity as the crew gets under sail rapidly to outdistance any pursuit. A day and a half later you have returned to Stormreach and stand once again in the Hand of Stalwart Reverie. A host of scribes stand at the ready to record the details of the recovered shard, but the Voice of the Storm frowns as you describe your failure. “I had expected better of you. I suppose we just have to find someone more competent to locate the Mere of Shattered Souls. Leave us before I dwell further on your empty-handed return.”

If any PC successfully returned with any bilestone, all of the PCs receive the **Bilestone Powder** story object.

Resolving Obscura Secret Missions

Any PC that completes the secret mission given to them by their Obscura at the beginning of the adventure should receive the **Obscura Reward 5** story object. Here is a summary of what must be done to receive this reward.

- *Children of Xoriat*: No PC can return with an aboleth egg, a piece of bilestone, or Eihoom (a phrenic skum). If any PC does so, including the Child of Xoriat, then they fail.
- *The Defiance*: The PC must recover five pounds of bilestone from either the skum village or the aboleth spire. Recovering the bilestone once a significant source is found takes less than a minute, though trying to scrape it from the walls of the spire would take hours or days.
- *Instruments of Change*: The PC must recover an intact egg from the hatchery.
- *Mourners of Yore*: The PC must convince Eihoom to return with them to the Cabal, and Eihoom must successfully be brought back alive.

Event Treasure

If you are running *COS-3 Khyber's Children* as part of another event and the PCs successfully found the psionic shard, please have each PC record the following event treasure upon their adventure journals in addition to any story objects. Each PC may choose between a *potion of cure moderate wounds* and a *potion of water breathing* to be carried on their adventure journal until the results of this event are reported and their EV is updated.

Adventure Questions

1. Describe how the PCs dealt with the hungry sharks.
 - a. The fish were filleted and served up raw. (300 xp, 0 gp)
 - b. Also being predators, the PCs got along well with the sharks and avoided combat. (300 xp, 0 gp)
 - c. The hungry predators were too much for the PCs and the party fled or was otherwise defeated. (100 xp, 0 gp)
 - d. The PCs never encountered the sharks. (0 xp, 0 gp)
2. How did the PCs' meeting with Eihoom go?
 - a. The PCs killed the skum before he could surrender. (100 xp, 0 gp)
 - b. The PCs made a deal for information with the skum. (50 xp, 0 gp)
 - c. Eihoom was easily tricked or intimidated into serving the interests of the Cabal and returned with the PCs after giving the PCs information about the area. (100 xp, 0 gp)
 - d. The PCs never encountered Eihoom. (0 xp, 0 gp)
3. How did the PCs get into the aboleth spire?
 - a. The PCs used stealth or guile to avoid the guards. (300 xp, 0 gp)
 - b. The party rushed the guards and slew them all. (300 xp, 50 gp)
 - c. The characters never made it into the spire. (0 xp, 0 gp)
4. What was the final outcome with the skum inside the spire?
 - a. None could stand before the fury of the PCs who defeated all who stood before them. (600 xp, 450 gp)
 - b. The PCs were able to defeat some of the skum, but missed some. (400 xp, 350 gp)
 - c. The skum drove the PCs away with their fishy prowess. (200 xp, 200 gp)
 - d. The PCs never encountered the skum inside the spire. (0 xp, 0 gp)
5. Did the PCs interact with the aboleths?
 - a. Yes they defeated them. (150 xp, 0 gp)
 - b. Yes, they saw them and ran for their lives. (150 xp, 0 gp)
 - c. No. (0 xp, 0 gp)
6. Did the PCs recover the psionic shard?
 - a. Yes. (25 xp, 500 gp)
 - b. No. (0 xp, 0 gp)
7. Rate the players' role-playing (while keeping in mind limitations of convention time restrictions)?
 - a. Excellent, they should all be on the silver screen. (25 xp, 0 gp)
 - b. Good, you had a fun time. (20 xp, 0 gp)
 - c. Fair, someone used a funny voice. (10 xp, 0 gp)
 - d. Poor, they rolled some dice and ignored chances to role-play. (0 xp, 0 gp)

Story Object Request:

EXCS11 Bilestone Powder: You have retrieved a portion of the aboleth bilestone. After much research, the Cabal has twisted it to its own uses. For your service you are given one use of this powder per adventure. You may use it while casting any spell with a casting time of one standard action or less that offers a Will saving throw to increase the DC by +2. This increase the casting time to one full round. If you choose not to use the powder as a spell component, you may swallow the powder to gain a +1 alchemical bonus to your next Will saving throw. This bonus lasts for one hour, or until a Will save is needed.

EXCS12 Obscura Reward #5: You have succeeding in a secret mission given to you by your Obscura. The benefits from the Stormwrack supplement that you unlock

depend upon the Obscura to which you belong. You are assumed to have fulfilled any role-playing requirements for any of these prestige classes.

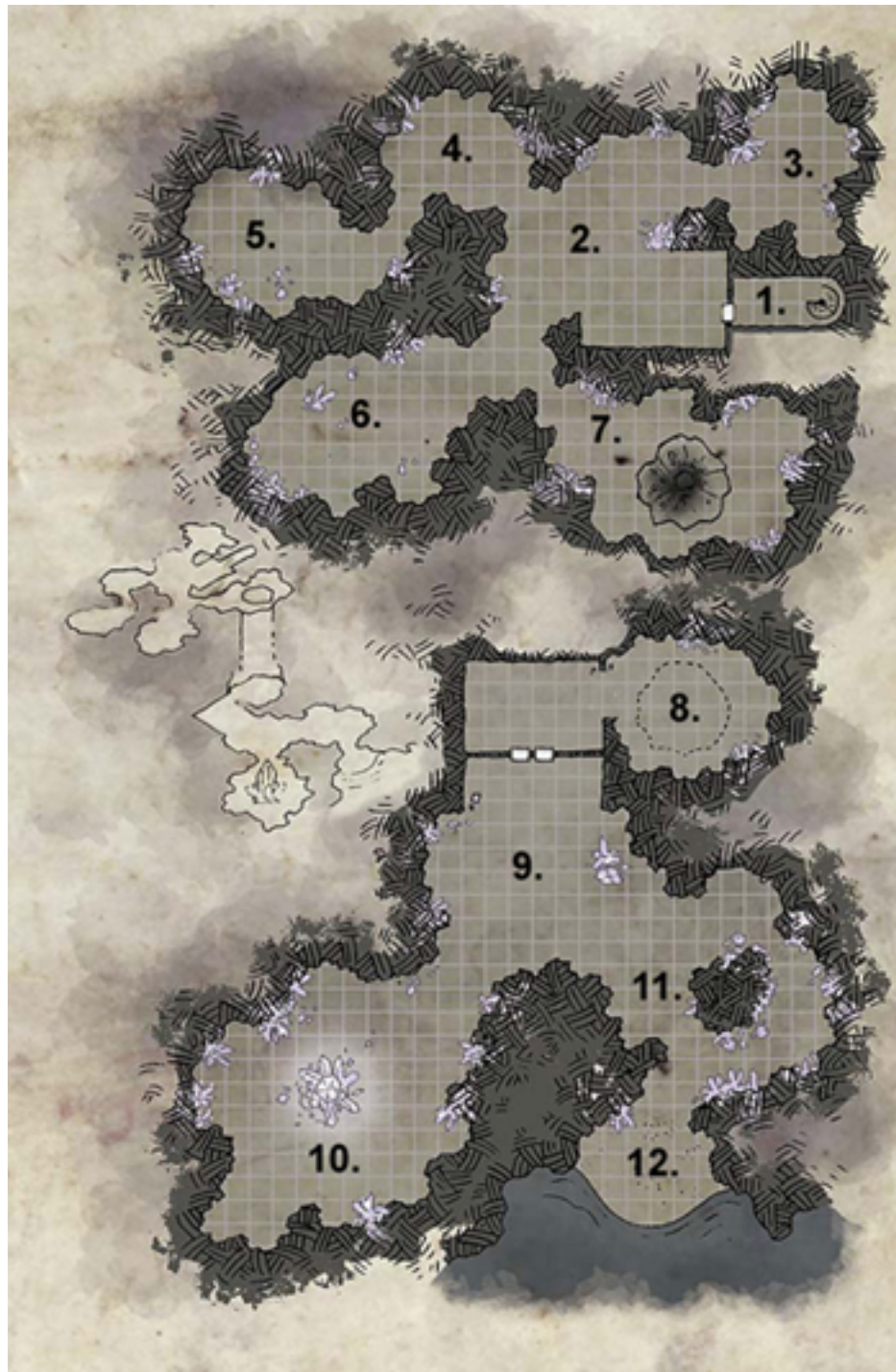
Children of Xoriat: feat - clever wrestling; prestige classes - leviathan hunter, scarlet corsair

Defiance: feat - storm magic; prestige class - leviathan hunter; spell - urchin's spines

Instruments of Change: feat - blackwater invocation; prestige class - sea witch; spell - favorable wind

Mourners of Yore: feat - windsinger; prestige class - stormcaster; spell - kuo-toa skin

Appendix One: DM's Map of the Aboleth Spire



Appendix Two: Eihoom's Map of the Spire



Appendix Three: Underwater Rules

Cloak of the Sea

Some PCs who have played *COS-1 The Sahuagin Stone* and have the **Mark of the Regvagu** story object can cast *cloak of the sea* upon themselves, lasting sixteen hours. Those under the effects of *cloak of the sea* are immune to most of the detrimental effects of being below water.

Cloak of the Sea

Transmutation

Level: Druid 5, sorcerer/wizard 6

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

While underwater, the subject functions as if affected by *blur* (PH 206), *freedom of movement* (PH 233), and *water breathing* (PH 300), and doesn't take nonlethal damage for the duration of the spell. When out of water (or even partially out), the subject gains none of these advantages except *water breathing*. The subject can leave and reenter water without ending the spell.

Hypothermia

Despite the tropical weather at the surface, the water at the bottom of the ocean is quite cold. The water temperature deals 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per hour of exposure. You can negate this damage with a successful Constitution check (DC 9, +1 per previous check).

Light

No sunlight permeates to the depths at which the PCs travel. Those relying on normal vision are treated as blind. Only those with darkvision see normally without a light source.

Underwater Combat

Land-based creatures can have considerable difficulty when fighting in water. The effects are summarized in the accompanying table. They apply even when PCs are walking along the bottom.

Ranged Attacks Underwater: Thrown weapons are ineffective underwater. Attacks with other ranged weapons take a -2 penalty on attack rolls for every 5 feet of water they pass through, in addition to the normal penalties for range.

Fire: Nonmagical fire (including alchemist's fire) does not burn underwater. Spells or spell-like effects with the fire descriptor are ineffective underwater unless the caster makes a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level). If the check succeeds the spell creates a bubble of steam instead of its usually fiery effect, but otherwise the spell works as described. A supernatural fire effect is ineffective underwater unless its description states otherwise.

Magic Items: Saltwater immediately destroys any scroll opened before it can be read. Potions work normally.

Condition	Slashing Or Bludgeoning Attack	Tail Attack	Movement	Off Balanced ⁴
<i>Freedom of movement</i>	normal /normal	normal /normal	normal	No
HAS A swim speed	-2/half	normal	normal	No
Successful Swim check	-2/half ¹	-2/half	quarter or half ²	No
Firm footing ³	-2/half	-2/half	half	No
None of the above	-2/half	-2/half	normal	Yes

1 A creature without a *freedom of movement* effects or a swim speed makes grapple checks underwater at a -2 penalty, but deals damage normally when grappling.

2 A successful Swim check lets a creature move one-quarter its speed as a move action or one half its speed as a full-round action.

3 Creatures have firm footing when walking along the bottom, braced against a ship's hull, or the like. A creature can only walk along the bottom if it carries enough gear to weigh itself down — at least 16 pounds for Medium creatures, twice that for each size category larger than Medium, and half that for each size category smaller than Medium.

4 Creatures flailing about in the water (usually because they failed their Swim checks) have a hard time fighting effectively. An off-balance creature loses its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, and opponents gain a +2 bonus on attacks against it.

Handout #1: Obscura Orders

The DM should have each player secretly write down their membership in an Obscura, if any, and then provide them with the appropriate handout. These are SECRET orders and should only be shown to players whose PCs are in the listed Obscura.

Children of Xoriat

As you return to your room, a drow warrior stops you and places a sheathed dagger in your hand. "You will need this," he says. Examining the blade once you return to your room you find the hilt is carved to look like a smiling child. Pulling the blade, a note falls to the floor.

"Strength of the mind is often the greatest weakness suffered by the Children and powers that manipulate or bend our will are a constant threat. The deep below is rife with beings and objects that twist the will and many other Obscura seek to control them. That edge cannot be allowed, lest it be used against us. Without slaying any members of the Cabal, let no one return with anything or anyone that augments, or possesses the power to affect, the mind."

Goal: Prevent other PCs from recovering anything or anyone (besides the psionic shard) from the deep that might be used to twist the minds of others.

The Defiance

As your group prepares to leave, the Voice of the Storm stops you outside your room, notices your attire and asks if you have ever seen an eclipse. When you respond *"No, but I will see the one that is coming,"* he smiles. After being certain you are alone, he explains that aboleths of the Thunder Sea often build with a strange mineral that saps the wills of other. This mineral, called bilestone, might be of use in interrogating or corrupting enemies of the Cabal. After giving you a clear description of the stone, it looks much like melted obsidian and is greasy and warm to the touch, the Voice of the Storm charges you with bringing back a large chunk of it; at least five pounds worth. As its proximity will be temporally harmful to yourself and your fellow party members, the Voice recommends that you not share your knowledge with the rest.

Goal: Recover five pounds of bilestone from the undersea enclave.

Instruments of Change

An elven man is humming a tuneless song in the dining hall as you were returning to your room. With your response, he offers his meal saying he doesn't plan to finish it. Sitting at the table, you find writing upon his linen napkin.

"We know you have been ordered to go into the deep where the aboleth slavers dwell. Our sages tell us that an aboleth is born with all the memories of his race, and the aboleths of the Thunder Sea have dwelt in the shadow of Xen'drik for millennia. While no adult aboleth would barter with us, nor could we likely capture one alive, an egg could be easily acquired, hatched, and the young could be swayed to our cause or controlled by force. Bring us one of the deep leviathan's eggs. Aboleths anchor them amongst coral with a thick mucus and it is said they glow a faint unearthly pink while in the darkness of the deep."

Goal: Return with a viable aboleth egg.

Mourners of Yore

While gathering your belongings for the journey, a small child wearing blue costume jewelry tears on the left side of her face walked past your room. She started as you noticed her and dropped the doll she was carrying as she ran away. Pinned to the back of the doll was a note.

"The attentions of the Cabal are continually turned toward the deep, but few of us are equipped to go below the sea without powerful magic. The single-minded focus of our sahuagin allies to the Devourer leaves little room for us to care for the weak and needy of this watery realm. While you are below, please be aware of those in need of our assistance who might also be of future use to us in gathering others from the sea who might be brought into our fold."

Goal: Make a new ally for the Cabal of Shadows while below the sea.

No Obscura

You do not belong to any Obscura. Lucky you, you might just be above the backstabbing and betrayal. Maybe.

Goal: Do as the Voice of the Storm has asked and retrieve the psionic shard.