

# Quests of Doom 4

## Cave of Iron

By Steve Winter



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## Cave of Iron

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## GENERAL RESOURCES

Swords & Wizardry Complete<sup>S&W</sup>  
 The Tome of Horrors Complete<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Tome of Horrors 4<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Tome of Adventure Design<sup>S&W</sup>  
 Monstrosities<sup>S&W</sup>  
 Bill Webb's Book of Dirty Tricks<sup>PF</sup>  
 Razor Coast: Fire as She Bears<sup>PF</sup>  
 Book of Lost Spells<sup>5e, PF</sup>  
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 The Tome of Blighted Horrors<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>  
 Book of Alchemy\*<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>

## THE LOST LANDS

Rappan Athuk<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Rappan Athuk Expansions Vol. I<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 The Slumbering Tsar Saga<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 The Black Monastery<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Cyclopean Deeps Vol. I<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
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 Razor Coast<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Razor Coast: Heart of the Razor<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Razor Coast: Freebooter's Guide to the Razor Coast<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 LL0: The Lost Lands Campaign Setting\*<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>  
 LL1: Stoneheart Valley<sup>PF, S&W</sup>

LL2: The Lost City of Barakus<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
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 LL5: Borderland Provinces<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>  
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 LL7: The Blight<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>  
 LL8: Bard's Gate<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>  
 LL9: Adventures in the Borderland Provinces<sup>5e, PF, S&W</sup>

## QUESTS OF DOOM

Quests of Doom (Vol. 1)<sup>5e</sup>  
 Quests of Doom (Vol. 2)<sup>5e</sup>  
 Quests of Doom (includes the 5e Vol. 1 and 2, but for PF and S&W only)<sup>PF, S&W</sup>  
 Quests of Doom 2<sup>5e</sup>  
 Quests of Doom 3<sup>5e, S&W</sup>  
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## PERILOUS VISTAS

Dead Man's Chest (pdf only)<sup>PF</sup>  
 Dunes of Desolation<sup>PF</sup>  
 Fields of Blood<sup>PF</sup>  
 Mountains of Madness<sup>PF</sup>  
 Marshes of Malice<sup>PF</sup>

\* (forthcoming from **Frog God Games**)

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# Cave of Iron

*“And not only was the rich soil required to furnish corn and due sustenance, but men even descended into the entrails of the earth, and they dug up riches, those incentives to vice, which the earth had hidden and had removed to the Stygian shades. Then destructive iron came forth, and gold, more destructive than iron; then war came forth.”*

— Ovid, *Metamorphosis*

*Cave of Iron* is a **Swords & Wizardry Complete** adventure intended for characters of 1st to 3rd level. Characters at the upper limit of that range, or parties with more than five characters, might find some of the challenges on the easy side; the Referee should always feel free to add more foes to any encounter to bring it in line with the group’s power level.

Hillfort can be any remote town in your campaign, either a place the characters are passing through or a regular base of operations for them. In the Lost Lands campaign setting, Hillfort is located in the easternmost reaches of Keston Province where the Wilderland Hills reach out to the very edge of the Creeping Mire. Hillfort lies at the northern edge of those hills and is largely isolated from the rest of the province. Most trade out of Hillfort actually follows the Trader’s Way south to Albor Broce rather back into Keston proper.

## Background

The town of Hillfort started out exactly as one might expect: a fort on a hill. The original site was a primitive wooden palisade built by the Ancient Ones and abandoned before the rise of the Hyperborean Empire. Claimed by the arriving Hyperboreans, the fort was refurbished and improved, and a small town sprang up around it. For a while, its purpose was nothing more than defending the area against the dangers of the surrounding wilderness, but as centuries passed and the lands grew tamer through the rise and fall of Hyperborea and then of the Foerdewaith the town’s purpose gave way to trapping, lumbering, and agriculture.

Twelve years ago, valuable metals were found in the surrounding hills. Not gold or silver, but iron and copper. A mine was opened, dwarven experts on the crafts of mining and smelting were brought in to manage operations, and Hillfort and the new Hardshale Mine thrived on the trade.

But now, something’s gone wrong. Every month, a wagon train from Hillfort carries supplies to the mine and returns laden with wrought iron and with miners taking time off from the arduous work. The round trip to and from the mine seldom takes more than a week, but the last supply train left three weeks ago and hasn’t returned yet. Riders were dispatched to investigate when the wagons were four days overdue, and they haven’t been heard from, either. Short-range patrols from the fort report more than the average amount of goblin activity in the forested hills between Hillfort and the mine, but the goblins don’t seem to be on a war footing.

## What’s Really Happening

The problem at the mine was triggered when workers broke into subterranean chambers where two threats lived: russet mold and a shroom. The russet mold transformed most of the miners into vegepygmies, and the shroom — an evil, ambitious, hyper-intelligent mushroom creature named Pezzi Zakii — recognized a golden opportunity when fate dropped one into its lap.

The mine and smelting operation are now taken over by the vegepygmies, their shroom overlord, and the shroom’s plant minions. Zakii knows that the town will send more people to investigate, so it has baited a careful trap around the mine. Only when it’s strong enough will the shroom’s army march. First, Zakii wants a few adventurers to fall into its clutches.

## Adventure Summary

Although the adventure can take many paths depending on the characters’ strategy, the most likely course is outlined here.

Events kick off when characters are approached by the mayor of Hillfort, who hopes to hire them to investigate what has happened at the mine. On their trek to the mine, characters encounter goblins driven from their villages by the encroaching plant creatures. These goblins are highly distrustful, but they can provide useful information to characters who negotiate with them. Farther along, characters encounter some of Zakii’s malevolent plants and awakened plant creatures firsthand. Before reaching the mine, they encounter Zakii itself, in the guise of a hermitlike but friendly plant-creature claiming that it also wants to investigate the strange occurrences at the mine. Zakii tries to win the characters’ confidence by offering useful information and by helping them survive a potentially lethal encounter with hostile plants (prearranged by Zakii, of course). It wants to accompany the characters, if they allow it. If not, it shadows them; Zakii has no trouble tracking the characters’ whereabouts, thanks to its many plant allies.

At the Hardshale Mine, characters should explore the mysteriously abandoned camp, smelting operation, and mine head. They find scattered evidence of a battle, but the vegepygmies captured most of the miners and fed them to the russet mold, which transformed them into more vegepygmies. Many dangerous plants haunt the mine area, but characters find many more questions than answers there.

Eventually, they’ll need to explore the mine itself. This is where they discover the breach into the larger Under Realms and encounter vegepygmies, russet mold, and ultimately, the treachery of Pezzi Zakii.

## Adventure Hooks

Hillfort can be any remote town in your campaign, either a place the characters are passing through or a regular base of operations for them. The town is abuzz over “the disaster at the mine.” The wagons have been overdue long enough that news has filtered out to surrounding towns, too, along with rumors that the mayor of Hillfort is offering a reward to anyone who brings back word from the mine.

If characters are in a nearby town and show no inclination to investigate rumors from Hillfort, a local mage with an interest in plants could hire them to investigate (creating the possibility of collecting a double payment, one from the mage and one from the mayor). Skedrak the Rhymer is another possible patron; he wants to see the “scene of calamity” badly enough that he’ll seek out the characters as escorts, if they don’t accept the mission from someone else first.

Finally, characters traveling through the area could be chased into town by a large band of goblins, or they could encounter hostile plants and Pezzi Zakii while traveling, with no foreknowledge of any disturbance at the mine.

## Hillfort

Although the fort is still prominent in Hillfort, it’s no longer the town’s reason for existing. This once-sleepy military outpost has transformed into a bustling boomtown filled with miners and smelters taking time off from their hard work, traders who buy and sell the wrought iron that comes down from Hardshale, and all the craftsmen, tradesmen, and clerks who keep the town and businesses going. Soldiers from the fort are in the minority, and they now have their hands full maintaining order in the town

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(workers from the mine are a rowdy bunch). Patrolling the surrounding hills is considered a secondary duty for the soldiers, especially since the remaining local goblin tribes have been largely peaceful since the end of the Wilderlands Clan War 11 years ago.

### Meet the Mayor

To kick things off, Jellam MacLeish, the mayor's personal secretary, approaches the characters. He brings them an invitation to meet with the mayor and discuss a special proposal that could be "highly rewarding for everyone involved, financially speaking."

Mayor Graham served for many years as the commander of the garrison at the fort, then "retired" and went into politics. She's an older woman with a prominent scar across her scalp (from a too-close encounter with a goblin spear) and an old soldier's habit of sprinkling her speech with colorful profanity.

"I'm glad you came, by Bowbe! Did MacLeish fill you in on any details? He didn't? That pus-worm! Well, park your arses and let me do his job, too, by Bowbe's hairy armpits.

"Something's gone in the crapper up at the mine, no one knows what, and no one has the stones to find out. A town full of rough, tough, hairy-chested miners, and none of 'em willing to take a risk. By the fires of the Nine Hells, they'd rather die from crotch rot than from a sword through the guts.

"Anyway, that's my problem. You look like adventuresome types. Not afraid to splash some blood on those tabards, eh, as long as there's more of the other jacker's than yours. MacLeish will give you details. MacLeish, you pus-worm!"

That ends their audience with the mayor. MacLeish explains the details (the mine's location, what's happened) and offers them 20 pounds of gold (1000 gp) or a cartload of wrought iron ingots (2000 gp, but much less convenient) as payment. Feel free to adjust the payment amounts to suit the economy of your campaign.

### Other Locals

There are other people in Hillfort the characters might want to talk to.

#### Jake Mottlow, miner

Jake is a hard-drinking miner who should have returned to the mine with the missing wagons, but when it was time for the convoy to depart, he was sleeping off a bender in an alley and no one could find him. Now he's broke and worried about his friends back at Hardshale. He can provide a general description of the camp and the mine as they were before this trouble started. He's willing to come along with characters as a guide for a cut of the pay, but the closer they get to the mine, the more Jake drinks. By the time they reach Hardshale, he's completely useless unless someone has taken his liquor away. He'll recover with a long rest. Jake knows the mine well and can answer most questions about it, the camp, and operations in both. He's a skilled laborer, not a warrior, and he tries to avoid combat. Jake's stats are those of a commoner.

**Jake Mottlow (Commoner):** HD 1; HP 4; AC 9[10]; Atk dagger (1d4); Move 12; Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; Special: none.  
Equipment: dagger.

#### Cobir Inawar, iron dealer

Inawar is a hill dwarf who buys wrought iron from the mine and ships it to Albor Broce for resale to point abroad. He worked at Hardshale in the early years as a smelter and a hammerer, but the mine and the camp are considerably larger now than they were when he was there. If characters press him for more than basic information, Inawar mentions offhandedly

that he's noticed a subtle decline in quality in the wrought iron from the last few shipments. He has some samples in his office. One of them shows indications of contamination by some pollen or dust, but it's barely noticeable (20% chance). He has no interest in returning to the mine.

### Skedrak the Rhymer

Ever since the riders failed to return, Skedrak has been working on an epic poem about the "Tragedy of Hardshale Mine." It's a lurid piece about murder, calamity, monsters, an ancient curse, and doomed love. Skedrak has no better idea about what happened at the mine than anyone else has; his version is entirely made up. But it's become an obsession with him, so that now he wants more than anything to see Hardshale firsthand. Skedrak approaches the characters before they leave town and volunteers to come with them. He's not much of a woodsman and he prefers fighting with his bow rather than his sword, but he's always cheerful, he's brave when he needs to be, and he's a hard worker.

**Skedrak the Rhymer (Thf2):** HP 5; AC 7[12]; Atk short sword (1d6), dagger (1d4) or shortbow x2 (1d6); Move 12; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; Special: backstab (x2), +2 save bonus vs. traps and magical devices, read languages, thieving skills.

**Thieving Skills:** Climb 86%, Tasks/Traps 20%, Hear 3 in 6, Hide 15%, Silent 25%, Locks 15%.

**Equipment:** leather armor, short sword, dagger, shortbow, 10 arrows.

## The Trail to Hardshale

Hardshale mine lies in the Wilderland Hills south of Hillfort. The wagons typically take eight days for the round trip to Hardshale and back: three days to reach the camp, two days to rest the mules and swap wagons, and three days to return. The distance from Hillfort to Hardshale is 18 miles as the crow flies but 24 miles along the wagon trail. Despite the longer distance, the wagon trail is quicker; off the trail, the lightly wooded hills are difficult terrain. Characters on foot can make the trip along the trail in one long day if they get an early start.

The encounters along the trail to Hardshale are all planned, not random, but the players don't need to know that. Feel free to roll dice as if you're checking for a random encounter, then chuckle or shake your head sadly as you look up the result.

### The Hardshale Road

The road is nothing more than wagon ruts through the hills. It's clear of trees and brush, and has no steep inclines. All of the water crossings are at spots where the streams are hard-bottomed and shallow except just after heavy rain. In open terrain, visibility varies from excellent (a mile or more from the tops of rises) to poor (25 to 50 yards in low spots between hills). Where the trail runs through forest, the trees crowd right up to the trail, so visibility can be very short.

## I. Goblin Sighting

From the top of a low rise, you spot a group of a half-dozen small, gray-skinned humanoids watching you. They're about 500 yards from the road, atop another hill, and appear to be riding wolves or large dogs. They don't seem to care that you've spotted them.

Characters might suspect (rightly) that these are goblins, but they can't be sure at this distance. Skedrak or Jake can confirm that goblin tribes live in the hills but are seldom seen this close to town as they were largely decimated in the war of a decade ago. The surviving remnant chose peace

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rather than continued conflict with the soldiers of the province.

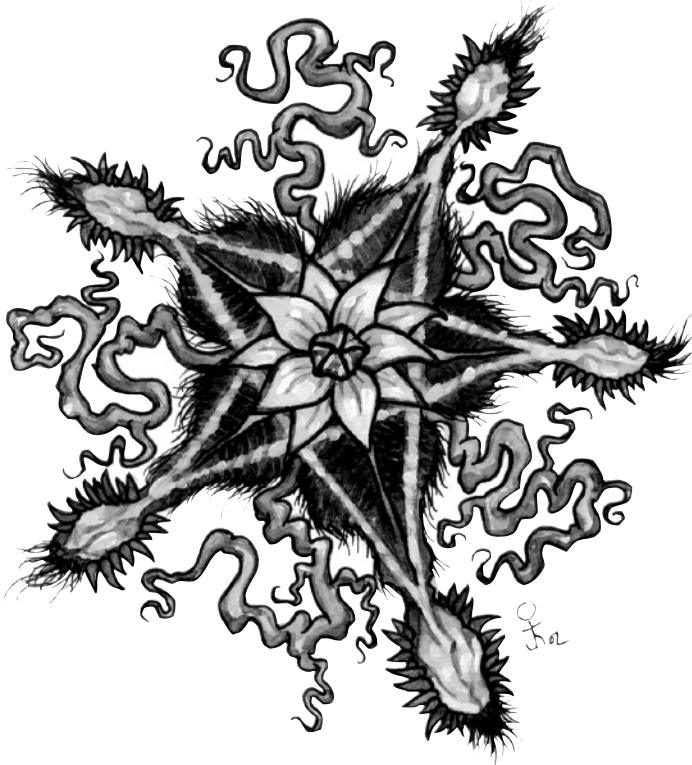
If any hostile move is made toward the goblins, such as drawing a bow, they instantly scatter and don't reappear. Characters won't be able to capture or kill one at this stage. Friendly overtures — hallooing, waving — are met with complete indifference.

Similar groups of goblins will be spotted from several points along the trail. Characters won't be able to tell whether it's different goblins each time or the same group shadowing them.

## 2. Hostile Fauna

The road ahead is somewhat overgrown with plants. The growth isn't so thick that it impedes your travel. You can easily walk through the low growth on the ground and dodge or brush aside any hanging vines. It's just odd, because it's only been a few weeks since the last wagons should have come through here.

The plants are 2 **Jupiter bloodsuckers** growing in from opposite sides of the road. They're entirely on the ground; vines hanging from the trees are a different species, completely harmless. Getting within 5 feet puts the character within the vines' reach, which confirms that they're dangerous.



The patch is easy enough to avoid by detouring off the road and through the woods until characters are past the vines. Such a detour takes only a minute or two.

Pezzi Zakii cultivated these plants here to help bait his trap for any adventurers who come up the road to investigate the mine. See **Encounter 4, Pezzi Zakii**, for full details.

**Jupiter Bloodsucker (2):** HD 3; HP 22, 19; AC 4[15]; Atk 6 vine leaves (1d6 plus blood drain); Move 3; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** blood drain (1 point Constitution damage/round per vine attached), smother (if multiple vines attach, save with -1 per vine past first to avoid), vulnerable to fire (double damage). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 344)

## 3. Goblin Patrol

Four goblins mounted on wolves are standing astride the road, about 200 feet ahead. One of them is distinctly bigger and uglier than the others. All four have bows in hand with arrows nocked, but they aren't actually aiming at you and drawing — yet. One of them scowls viciously and begins to raise its bow, but a snarl from the big one stops it. For the moment, that one seems to be holding them in check, waiting to see what you do.

The number of **goblins and wolves** described here is appropriate for a party of four 1st-level adventurers. For 2nd- and 3rd-level characters, or for a bigger group, double or triple the number.

Although they look as if they're spoiling for a fight, the goblins' leader (**Crova Toothkicker**) is more interested in talking. He mistrusts anyone coming from Hillfort on general principle, so characters need to make the first friendly move before any talking can happen.

If characters attack or act in an obviously hostile manner, the goblins fight by using their wolves' superior speed to keep the characters at long range while peppering them with arrows. If two goblins or two wolves are killed, the rest scatter.

### Negotiating with Crova Toothkicker

If characters make it clear that they aren't out for blood (approaching without weapons or under a white flag, for example), the biggest goblin rides forward to meet them. He speaks common poorly (about as well as a two-year-old). Communication will be easier if someone else speaks goblin.

The goblin boss has valuable information for the characters, but he doesn't just give it away. What he really wants is a *potion of healing* as the plants have hurt many of his people. He'll settle for a good weapon or something similar.

Crova knows that dangerous plants suddenly infested the surrounding area five or six weeks ago, and that "plants that walk" (vegepygmies) have been seen in the forest and have fought with his tribe. He can describe them well enough and even show off what he claims is a severed hand; it looks like a vaguely hand-shaped piece of brushwood, but it's the withered hand of a vegepygmy. A week ago, he rode close enough to the mine to see that the big fires weren't burning (no smoke) and to hear that no hammers were ringing. He looked, but saw no one. Crova didn't ride into the camp or investigate any further. He wanted nothing to do with whatever evil spirits carried away all those humans and dwarves.

**Crova Toothkicker (Goblin Boss):** HD 5; HP 21; AC 6[13]; Atk scimitar (1d6) or shortbow x2 (1d6); Move 9; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight, darkvision 60 ft.

**Equipment:** scimitar, shortbow, 10 arrows.

**Goblin (3):** HD 1d6 hp; HP 5, 4x2; AC 6[13]; Atk scimitar (1d6) or shortbow x2 (1d6); Move 9; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP B/10; **Special:** -1 to hit in sunlight, darkvision 60 ft.

**Equipment:** scimitar, shortbow, 10 arrows.

**Wolf (4):** HD 2+2; HP 17, 15, 13, 12; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d4+1); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** none.

## 4. Pezzi Zakii

Although you noticed no one near the trail, you hear a high-pitched voice, speaking slowly: "Greetings, travelers. To startle, please do not. I have only friendly."

Just a few yards to your right, among some fallen timber, you now notice a creature that resembles a halfling-sized

mushroom sitting with its short legs crossed in a meditative position atop a crumbling log. It's wearing no clothing, but it lifts a small satchel from behind the log, removes a colorful robe, and puts that on. "Humans like to wearing the clothes," it says. "I know this from humans friended to me in gone-by time." Dressed, it stands up and shoulders the satchel. "I am ready. Not for me delay. Walk and talk, talk and walk"

This is Pezzi Zakii, the evil **shroom** responsible for most of the trouble at Hardshale mine. Its fractured speech is an affectation to make itself seem slightly foolish and harmless; Zakii probably is more intelligent than any of the characters and speaks common perfectly, along with Sylvan, Undercommon, and Deep Speech.

Zakii does everything in its power to win the characters' confidence and to be treated as their friend. Characters tend to distrust everyone they meet on the road (often for good reason, sadly). Each Referee needs to gauge how his or her players might react to this strange creature and adjust Zakii's personality accordingly. Some groups will react more positively to a clownish figure or to one that exudes mystery, or to one that is a potent magic-user. Zakii can play any of those roles convincingly. This creature is an evil, manipulative super-genius. It is always thinking two or three steps ahead of the characters, so they should never be able to surprise it or catch it unawares without taking extreme precautions — and if they have secretive, private conversations to plan an attack against the shroom, that alone makes Zakii suspicious and puts it on its guard. Ultimately, the adventure doesn't hinge on the characters falling for Zakii's trick, but the Referee's job becomes easier and a lot more fun if they do. It is vital, however, that characters don't kill Zakii on the road. The shroom needs to be alive to confront them at the mine.

If Skedrak is with the group, Zakii's uniqueness fascinates him and he strongly favors inviting the creature along. Don't push this angle too hard, though; players become suspicious when one NPC lobbies for another. Use Skedrak to point out that Zakii seems harmless and its ability to communicate with plants could be useful, if characters don't reach those conclusions on their own.



## Conversing with Pezzi Zakii

The characters are bound to have questions for this strange creature. Here are some convenient answers to likely questions. All of Zakii's answers should be geared toward making characters believe that the creature is harmless and potentially valuable as an ally.

**What are you?** "No human-speak sounds for me. Call me Pezzi. Far away is home, in big, big, big forest. Big.

**Why are you here?** "Plants to study. Plants growing badness closely to here. Crazy plants. Pezzi do plant chatter, much to learn. Fix some maybe."

**How do you know about the plants going bad here?** "Plants talk, talk, talk. Gossip always like old blimmicks. Humans don't hear, but Pezzi is hearing. Chatter, chatter, chatter." (This isn't true; Zakii can animate and control plants, but it can talk to them only by casting the spell *Speak with plants*.)

**What are the plants saying right now?** (Pointing at the feet of a character who's standing on a fern) "Ouch." (Unless Zakii suspects one of the characters has cast *Speak with plants*, it can make up as much crazy, fractured plant talk as it wants.)

**Why should we trust you?** "Why not? Trusting you am I. 'The liar scrapes the pockets of weak trousers.' Elf philosophy. Elfs have tall wisdom."

**Did you know we were coming?** "Yes oh my. Crazy vines on trail, you fight, plants chatter." (Zakii knows all about the Jupiter bloodsuckers on the road since it put them there, and it assumes the characters encountered them.)

**Pezzi Zakii (Shroom):** HD 6+1; HP 43; AC 6[13]; Atk weapon (1d8); Move 9; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; **Special:** control plants, plant growth, spells (4/2/2). (**Monstrosities** 424)

**Spells:** 1st—charm person, detect magic, magic missile, sleep; 2nd—invisibility, phantasmal force; 3rd—hold person, lightning bolt.

## 5. Animated Plants

Without warning, plants on both sides of the road spring to the attack. Thorns lash at you, vines grab for your ankles and twine around your weapons. It's as if all of nature suddenly turned hostile.

Pezzi Zakii sprung this attack using its daily ability to control plants. They are completely under Zakii's control. If characters refused to let the odd creature travel with them, then it's trailing them through the woods and rushes to the characters' rescue partway through the battle.

The plants attack viciously and effectively for 2 or 3 rounds. Zakii doesn't let them hold back at all; it wants the characters to believe they're in real danger, and anything the plants do to weaken the characters is fine with the shroom. During the early rounds, Zakii fights enthusiastically with its staff. On the third or fourth round, depending on how the fight is going (ideally, the plants are getting the upper hand), Zakii adopts a pose as if doing mental battle with something, and silently commands the plants to retreat as if in fear (or as fearfully as a plant can manage to look). Zakii makes a substantial show of psychically forcing the plants back until they collapse in defeat, then droops in apparent exhaustion itself.

Play this for all the drama it's worth. If the characters had doubts about Zakii's usefulness before, this encounter is meant to dispel them.

**Animated Plant (10):** HD 3; HP 22, 21, 20x3, 19x2, 17, 16, 15; AC 7[12]; Atk slam (1d6); Move 0 (immobile); Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** none.

# Hardshale Camp

Read the following description when characters get their first sight of Hardshale Mine.

If you had any doubts that something was wrong at Hardshale, they're gone now. The camp is still; the forges are cold, the anvils are silent, nothing moves. What's even stranger is that it looks as if it was abandoned years ago, not just a month ago, judging by the brush growing between the buildings, and the vines and ivy creeping up the walls and stretching through open windows and doors.

The plant growth is substantial but not so thick that characters can't move along the lanes. Most of the plants hug the buildings' walls. The buildings are in fine repair, not dilapidated, which makes the post-apocalyptic greenery look even more out of place.

## Feeble-minded Miners

When vegepygmies overran the mine and the camp, they captured as many miners as they could and brought them to Pezzi Zakii. The shroom fed bits of itself to many of them to turn them into utterly loyal, *feeble-minded* servants. Any who resisted the effect were thrown into russet mold and converted into vegepygmies.

A few of those *feeble-minded* humans are positioned around the camp to misdirect the characters' theories about what could account for the camp's collapse. Their only reaction to the characters' presence is watching; they follow the characters intently with their eyes. They no longer understand language and can't speak at all; the very idea of communication is beyond their comprehension.

The shroom offers no opinion about what happened to these individuals. Zakii claims to know nothing about human biology or what makes them sick.

Shrooms are so rare and so little is written about them in scholarly books that unless the characters have encountered one before (unlikely at their level), they have no chance to figure out on their own what's really afflicting these unfortunate miners (they might stumble onto the truth later when Zakii reveals its true intentions).

## Witch Grass

Patches of **witch grass** have sprung up among the other plants in the camp, as noted on the map. A character who tries to cast a magic-user spell within 20 feet of witch grass has a 10% chance of the spell failing.

Once characters become aware that something odd is going on with their magic, witch grass can be identified as the problem.

A character who brushes up against witch grass picks up its seeds in his or her clothing, and these are as bad as the parent plants. They have the same magic-damping effect. The seeds are tiny. Noticing them hitchhiking in the characters' clothing takes a deliberate examination. Once seeds are spotted, they can be eliminated from clothing and gear with an hour of painstaking cleaning. Otherwise, seeds lose their potency 12 hours after being picked up. Pezzi Zakii is immune to their effect, but it hides that fact from the characters. It might even point out the problem if it still needs to cement their confidence.

**Witch Grass:** HD 2; AC 9[10]; Atk none; Move 0 (immobile); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** seed spray (cling to anyone within 10 ft.), spell failure (20 ft. radius, magic-user spells have 10% chance of failure). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 600)

## I. Barn and Stables

This building looks like a barn. The wide doors are closed, and a lattice of vines growing across them keeps them that way. The lower portion of one door is partly smashed outward and it looks as though something might have tried digging its way under the door, but nothing bigger than a house cat could get through the gap.

The vines on the doors aren't dangerous. Characters can cut them away easily. Read the following description when they get a look inside.

The interior of the barn stinks abominably of death and horse manure. As your eyes adjust to the dim light, you make out eleven stalls; five contain mules standing amid heaps of manure and munching spilled oats from the floor so slowly you can barely tell they're moving. They look deathly ill and barely able to stand. The six remaining stalls contain dead mules in varying stages of decomposition, some dead for more than a month to others dead for just a few days.

Slowly, another shape separates itself from the "freshest" of the dead mules and rises to a standing posture. It appears human — barely — but there's no doubt that before you entered, it was face-down on the dead mule, eating.

Neither the mules nor the ghoul-like human present any danger. They are all dominated thralls of the 2 **bloodsuckle plants** hidden in shadowy recesses of the barn beneath piles of hay. The human is **Tomward Ippson**, formerly the mine's stablemaster. In his current state, he's little more than a zombie, capable of responding only to the psychic commands of his bloodsuckle masters. He doesn't even fight back if attacked. The bloodsuckles keep him alive to toss out oats for the mules, which they've been feasting on for a month. The domination is broken if the bloodsuckles are killed. At that point, Tomward collapses into a sobbing heap, his sanity broken.

Unless characters search the barn thoroughly before anything else, the bloodsuckles attack with surprise while characters are examining the mules or tending to Tomward. The mules join in the fight under the bloodsuckles' command, but each is already down 1d8 hp from the plants draining their blood. Four of the mules recover their health within a few days if the bloodsuckles are killed, but they will always be "strange" and disturbed. The fifth one is carrying one of the bloodsuckles' seeds; it dies within 24 hours and sprouts a new bloodsuckle.

A search of the barn turns up barrels of oats for the mules, 400 feet of rope, eight 10 foot lengths of chain, and a variety of tools used in caring for mules: currycombs, nail picks and trimmers, horseshoes in various sizes, a hammer and nails.

**Bloodsuckle (2):** HD 6; AC 7[12]; Atk 2 tendrils (1d4), limb rake (1d6); Move 0 (immobile); Save 11; AL N; CL/XP 8/800; **Special:** blood drain (2 tentacles hit, then automatic 1d4 damage/round), create host (inject sap to *charm* victim, save resists), grab, seed (1/month, implant in host and sprout in 1d4 days), summon host (if threatened, whine attracts dominated creatures). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 62)

**Mule (4):** HD 2; HP 7, 6, 5, 4; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d4); Move 9; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** none.

## 2. Bunkhouse

Vines grow across the single door and through the open windows of this long, low building.

## CAVE OF IRON

The inside of the bunkhouse is one large room. Bunks line both long walls. Storage chests stand at the feet of the bunks and along the walls between bunks, below the windows.

At first glance, the place looks abandoned, but characters quickly spot what appear to be two corpses lying on bunks. Only one of them is actually a corpse; the other is alive but not moving. The living man opens his eyes when characters approach, and his eyes follow the characters' movements, but he doesn't respond in any other way. He acts as if paralyzed.

In fact, this miner is affected by Pezzi Zakii's *feblemind* effect from having been fed a bite of the shroom's flesh.

The corpse is the body of a middle-aged human man. The man's right leg is splinted, his right foot is heavily bandaged, and he's been speared through the chest. This unfortunate fellow had his leg broken and his foot crushed in a mining accident so he couldn't work. Vegepygmies found him sleeping here and killed him. There are no other signs of a fight or of any calamity.

If characters search the storage trunks, they come up with a total of 286 gp, 1380 sp, and 5475 cp, plus more rough clothing, blankets, and miscellaneous personal items of little value than they can carry.

The only other interesting details are the weapon racks along the two short walls; both could hold dozens of weapons and shields, and both are completely empty.

### 3. Tavern

This building looks more decorative than all the other drab, utilitarian structures in the camp. Shutters, windowsills, the front door, and other accents were painted bright green once upon a time. A wooden sign depicting a sledgehammer and a pick swings above the door: "the hammer and pick" would be a good guess. Clearly, this was the camp's saloon. The front door stands open and is free of encroaching plants, unlike the windows.

This wasn't just the camp's tavern: It served as the social hub for the workers, as their gathering place for meetings, their guildhall, and their temple on holy days and holidays.

Other than the plants creeping through the windows and an occasional rat or beetle scuttling across the floor, the place looks ready for business.

The building consists of:

- the large public room containing a bar stocked with kegs of ale and wine, a massive fireplace, three long plank tables with benches, and four semiprivate booths with tables;
- a small kitchen for preparing pub-type food (most of the workers ate full meals in the camp's dining hall);
- a cool, dry cellar (accessible through a hatch in the kitchen) stocked with potatoes, onions, radishes, carrots, and salted meat;
- an upper floor (accessible from stairs in the public room) with living quarters and a second kitchen for the proprietor's family, plus three small but nicely-furnished rooms that were available for rent (these were used mostly by prospective ore buyers or investors who came to inspect the operation).

### Ground Floor: Flowershrouds

There is danger on the ground floor if characters get too close to the windows. Plants of various kinds have grown through all eight of the ground-floor windows; most of the plants are harmless flowering ivies, but 4 **flowershrouds** are lurking in four of the windows. The deadly flowershrouds are indistinguishable from the innocent plants they're hiding in. As characters move in to investigate the public room, ask whether they're moving toward the center of the room or staying near the walls. Roll a die for each character who stays near the walls; on an odd result, that character is ambushed by a flowershroud. All three of the plant's first-round attacks are made with surprise. Also, unless all four flowershrouds are attacking, one of them moves to block the door; it reaches the opening with its second move.



**Flowershroud (4):** HD 3; HP 21, 20, 17; AC 6[13]; Atk thorn-strand (1d4 plus poison); Move 3; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** immune to bludgeoning weapons, poison (convulse for 1d6+3 rounds, lose 1hp/round, save resists). (**Monstrosities** 173)

### Upper Floor: Mandragoras

Some of Pezzi Zakii's plant servants are scavenging for rotting meat in the upstairs kitchen.

This small kitchen undoubtedly served the needs of the proprietor's family. The smell tells you just as undoubtedly that meat and vegetables were left rotting here for weeks. As foul as the smell is to you, it seems to be enticing to four creatures unlike anything you've seen before. They stand about 4 feet high and resemble nothing so much as blight-stricken bushes. Their arms and legs are gnarled and twisted like tree roots, and the knotty mass that comprises both their body and head has no apparent eyes or other organs — yet they pause from their tussling over of a slab of putrid mutton and turn to "face" you as you enter.

There are 6 **mandragoras** in all: four that the characters can see from the doorway and two more lurking beneath a counter. The four visible rush straight into combat, but the other two try working stealthily around behind characters.

If asked about them, Pezzi explains that the creatures are mandragoras: fungus creatures that scavenge for dead food and hunt for living food with equal enthusiasm. They are moderately intelligent but can't be reasoned with — at least not in any known language. (Or so the shroom claims. In

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fact, it can communicate with them easily, and they're here in the camp under Zakii's orders.)

**Mandragora (6):** HD 1; HP 6, 5x2, 4x3; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 tentacle slaps (1d4); Move 12 (burrow 9); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** constrict (if 2 tentacles hit, hold for automatic 1d4 damage/round), light blindness, magic resistance (10%), resist fire (50%). (**Monstrosities** 173)

### 4. Kitchen and Dining Hall

Read the first paragraph of this description when characters approach the dining hall and the second paragraph when they enter. The hole in the roof is the only way in. Just finding a door or window requires 10 minutes of cutting away greenery, and every portal is barred stoutly from the inside.

This building looks different from others in camp — as if a battle was fought here. The building is draped in vines and ivy so thick that it's hard to see the structure underneath. About half of the roof has burned away, leaving blackened shingles and sagging timbers. Plants grow right up to the scorched edges but don't appear to extend into the building. You can hear a faint *thunk ... thunk ... thunk* sound coming from somewhere inside the structure.

None of the plants growing on the dining hall is dangerous. Characters can climb the vines onto the roof with ease and can even lower vines into the interior like a makeshift rope ladder.

Inside, it's clear this was the camp's dining hall. Two rows of tables with benches fill most of the open area. A fire pit in the middle of the room would have vented through a hole in the roof. Someone must have built a roaring fire; shattered portions of benches, barrels, and table planks stick out of the now-cold fire pit, and the rafters above the pit are heavily scorched as if flames reached all the way to the ceiling.

The doors and shutters are all closed and barred from the inside.

The sounds you heard from outside are coming through a wide doorway at the end of the room.

Once the miners realized the danger they were in, a group tried to make a last stand here, where they had a stockpile of food and water. Unfortunately, in trying to use fire as a weapon against the vegpeygimies and encroaching plants, they accidentally set the roof alight. The plants allowed the flames to create a sizable breach, then beat out the flames, lifted out the miners (most of whom were overcome by smoke), and carried them away to the mine.

A wide doorway connects the dining area to the kitchen, which is well-stocked with preserved food, vegetables that are about a month past their prime, and barrels of water and wine. In the kitchen, the camp's cook — now *feble-minded* — is standing at a chopping block with a cleaver in his hand, mindlessly chopping the cleaver into the wood every five seconds or so. It appears he's been doing this for a long time; the chopping block is deeply gouged, and wood chips litter the floor around his feet. He looks at the characters but doesn't respond to their presence. He will walk where they lead him, sit down or stand up if physically guided to do so, but he doesn't speak or respond to language at all.

### 5. Ore Shed

Ingots of smelted iron are stacked in this shed, apparently awaiting shipment back to Hillfort. Ingots near the bottom of the stacks have a patina of rust, indicating they've been here for a while.

These ingots are the product of the smelter. They are very low-grade iron. A typical ingot is roughly 3in by 3 in by 16 in and weighs about 40 pounds (each worth roughly 4 gp), but since they're beaten into shape rather than cast, their shapes, sizes, and weights vary a lot. A quick estimate yields a count of about 250 ingots — roughly 5 tons of wrought iron, or a little more than three wagon loads.

### 6. Smelter

This structure isn't a walled building but is just a roof supported by sturdy timbers. Three enormous furnaces with bellows sit cold and idle, the charcoal in them long since burned out. Many anvils are arranged in rows, with heavy hammers and leather aprons hanging nearby. The floor is clay, hard-packed and baked by the heat from the furnaces to a dull finish. A heap of slag towers at one end of the assembly, with a half-dozen shovels stacked nearby.

These furnaces heated ore from the mine until it was soft enough to hammer to force out molten slag: copper, oxides, and many other impurities with a lower melting point than iron. Characters with backgrounds in smithing, mining, and similar trades understand this process. The resulting wrought iron was beaten into ingots and stored in building 5 while awaiting shipment to Hillfort.

Pezzi Zakii is intensely curious about what went on here. It is acquainted with smelting copper and bronze, but iron is new to the shroom. The smelting and refining process for iron is completely different from what Zakii knows. It asks characters many questions, professing that its curiosity is entirely academic — which it is, to a degree. At the same time, Zakii has seen the power of iron weapons over the simple wood and stone tools manufactured by the vegpeygimies. If it hopes to equip an army, it would like to know the secret of manufacturing such marvelous things.

If characters seem at all willing, Pezzi presses them to demonstrate the process. Everything needed is on hand in the smelter. Characters would need about 30 minutes to get a fire burning and to heat some ore to the point where they could show their new friend how to hammer out the impurities. If they do this, and Zakii escapes at the end of the adventure, the shroom is certain to reappear sometime in the future with an iron-equipped army.

### 7. Storage Sheds

All sorts of supplies for the camp are stored in these sheds — rope, chain, lumber, canvas, spare tools and tool handles, nails, candles, lamps, lamp oil, etc. — but the chief commodity is heaps of ore from the mine. High-grade ore usually is taken straight to the smelter. Lower-grade stuff is stored here for those times when the mining slows down and the smelters get ahead on their work.

If characters search these sheds with any thoroughness (more than just a glance through the door or a single step inside), they notice crates, barrels, and bags that have been carefully opened. This is the work of Pezzi Zakii's minions. If they keep looking, eventually they run across 6 **mandragoras** and 1 **green brain** in a shed of the Referee's choosing. These creatures are carefully inspecting everything in the shed, searching for anything that could prove useful. (Although the mandragoras are at least as intelligent as the green brain, they have short attention spans and are easily distracted by anything edible. Zakii has found that putting a green brain in charge is crucial for any task that takes more than a few minutes.) Characters have no chance to surprise these creatures unless they're taking extreme precautions to be stealthy. The plants are almost certain to detect the approaching characters and to set up an ambush.

**Mandragora (6):** HD 1; HP 6x2, 5x3, 4; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 tentacle slaps (1d4); Move 12 (burrow 9); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** constrict (if 2 tentacles hit, hold for automatic 1d4 damage/round), light blindness, magic resistance (10%), resist fire (50%). (**Monstrosities** 173)

## 9. Mine Entrance

Tower mounds of tailings flank the mine entrance on both sides. Narrow-gauge Iron cart rails run into the mine and connect it to the storage sheds and smelters. A heavy wooden cart sits empty on the rails, and two others are tipped on their sides off the rails. A large capstan sits outside the entrance, and chains extend from it into the mine. Harnesses on the poles and tracks on the ground make it clear mules or horses turned the capstan.

Plants and vines grow all around the entrance. The greenery extending from the cave-like entrance is vaguely reminiscent of tentacles reaching from the Under Realms ...

An open shed to the right of the tunnel contains picks, shovels, hammers, drills, and assorted other mining tools in a jumble.

Runes and symbols representing wealth and long life are carved into the rock face above and on both sides of the entrance; the miners probably put them there to bring them good luck.

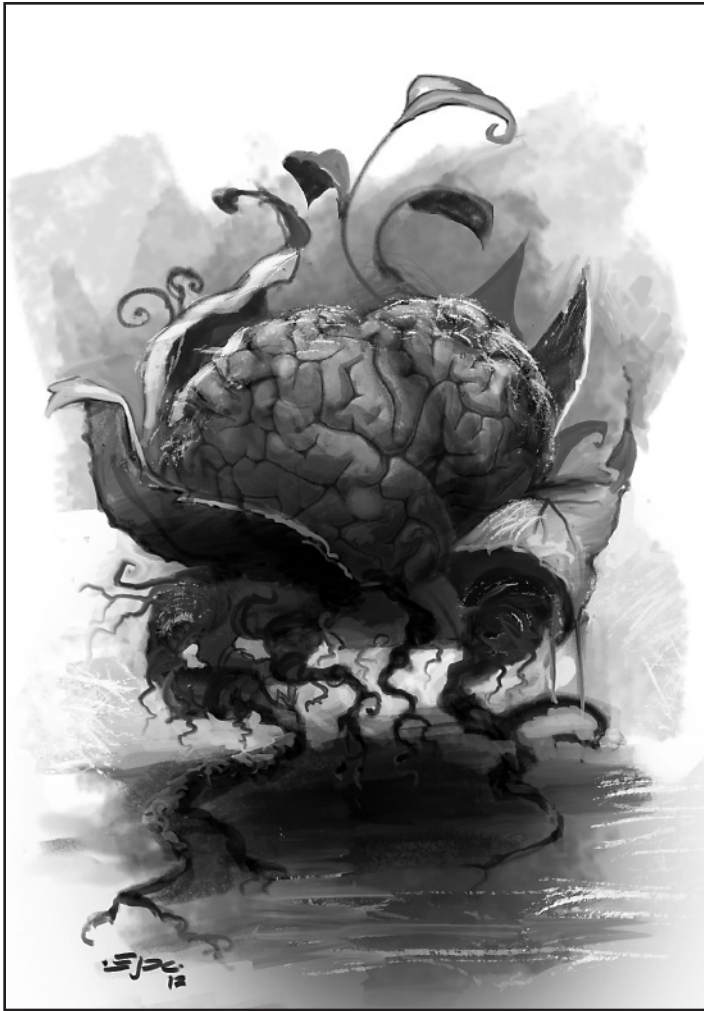
Any druid or elf recognizes that plants should have a very difficult time growing on the barren, stony tailings and hard-packed earth around the mine entrance. Something unnatural forced them to grow here.

Most of the plants are mundane vines, ivies, and thorn bushes, including many wild roses, which are tough and thorny. Cutting a path through these plants isn't especially difficult, but it's slow. Trying to push through the thorn-covered vines without clearing a trail is almost impossible; characters can move only 5 feet per turn this way.

Mixed in among the wild roses are 6 **vampire roses**. If possible, the roses hold their attack until intruders have hacked their way well into the growth so that their movement is restricted to a narrow path before attacking from all sides.

Just inside the mouth of the mine entrance is a **cobra flower**. It strikes as characters enter the mine, preferably while some characters are still fighting the vampire roses.

**Vampire Rose (6):** HD 4; HP 30, 27, 26, 24; AC 4[15]; Atk stalk (1d4); Move 3; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 4/120; Special:



**Green Brain:** HD 5; HP 34; AC 3[16]; Atk none; Move 0 flying (15); Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; Special: mental abilities. (*Monstrosities* 227)

**Mental abilities:** telepathy, wide mental force cone (50 ft. long cone, 30 ft. wide at end, spells disrupted, save or become disoriented [-2 to hit for 1d3 rounds, 1-in-6 chance to drop held items]), narrow mental force cone (2d6 damage, save resists).

## 8. Maintenance Shed

This must have been the camp's workshop. It's dominated by a blacksmith's forge and anvil, but there's also a carpenter's bench, sawhorses, and a wide assortment of tools. A man stands near the forge, lifelessly pumping the bellows. He pays no attention to you.

The man at the bellows is another *feble-minded* miner. His eyes follow the characters' movements and he allows himself to be repositioned and led around, but he doesn't respond to language and utters no words himself.

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camouflage (surprise on 1–3 on 1d6; 1–3 on 1d8 vs. rangers and druids). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 581)

**Cobra Flower:** HD 6; HP 44; AC 5[14]; Atk bite (1d8 plus 1d6 acid); Move 3; Save 11; AL N; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** squeeze (after bite, 1d8 damage per round, +2 to hit with bite). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 103)

## Hardshale Mine

The mine cuts into the base of a large hill. It consists of three levels, described below. There's no light inside but what characters bring with them. Lanterns are much better than torches in the mine, because they produce less smoke and they can be set down on convenient ledges and stones. There are no wall sconces for torches in the entire mine, and a torch that's dropped or set down on the floor has a 50% chance of sputtering out. Beyond 20 feet from the entrance, the temperature is a constant 50° F everywhere in the mine.

Iron cart tracks are spiked to the floor for ore carts to roll on. Marks on the floor indicate mules or horses often pulled them. Chains from the capstan run through heavy pulleys anchored near where the floor meets the wall to prevent miners and mules from tripping over them any more than is necessary.

Much of the mine's ceiling is shored up with stout timbers. These are mostly a precaution. Other than a few exceptions noted below, just destroying the timbers won't cause a cave-in.

Note that each hex on the mine map represents 100 feet, but the tunnel isn't 100 feet wide. In most places, it's only 10 to 20 feet wide.

## Pezzi Zakii's Scheme

Pezzi Zakii hopes to spring its trap on the characters during their exploration of the mine and the caves beyond. Exactly how it does this is up to you. It needs to get the characters to eat at least a small bite of its flesh. The shroom can easily trim off tiny slices of itself without causing any harm or leaving a visible mark. If it gets the opportunity to feed a sliver of itself to a character, it does so. It is on the lookout for opportunities to "poison" characters by:

- passing a plate of food to a character during a meal;
- aiding an injured character after a battle;
- smearing a bit of shroom onto some jerky or other rations in a character's pack while no is watching;
- asking for a taste of someone's food out of curiosity, making a yucky face, and handing it back with a tiny "contamination."

The most important concern for Zakii is that if its toxic flesh *febleminds* a character, there should be no reason for other characters to suspect the shroom was the source of the problem. Or at least, there should be other circumstances that are more likely suspects so Zakii can deflect their suspicions (many people touched the food more than Pezzi did, the character's wounds might have been inflicted by poisoned weapons or poisonous plants, etc.). Note that characters who make a successful saving throw against the shroom's toxic flesh are aware something was "off" about the food they almost ate, but they don't gain any insight into the specific problem beyond their suspicion. They can't even be sure the food was poisoned without further testing or magic, and they certainly gain no clue from the saving throw that the toxin came from Pezzi Zakii.

In all situations, remember that the shroom has a genius intellect, so it never tries anything foolish or reckless. Just as importantly, it's not likely to try anything spur-of-the-moment. Zakii is a planner. It looks for weaknesses it can exploit in the future. For example, it won't poison a character the first time it tends someone's wounds. First, it establishes that letting Pezzi tend someone's wounds is safe and beneficial, then it makes its move. It is always thinking ahead. That's easier for Zakii than for the characters in this situation, both because the shroom is so smart and because it knows what lies ahead in the mine and in the caves.

It's vital that characters see other *febleminded* NPCs in the camp and

in the mine before any characters are affected. Zakii needs them to believe that an unknown toxin, pollen, or magical residue in the environment is responsible for the *feblemind* effect. The shroom offers this theory if no one else thinks of it, but it never pushes its ideas too hard; it understands that adventurers are suspicious by nature and they'll react negatively to a relative stranger trying to steer their actions.

## Top Level

The floor of the top-level slopes gradually upward as one moves farther into the mine. This effect is slight. Dwarves notice it automatically, but others have a 20% chance to detect it. The mine was constructed this way on purpose; ore carts are easier to move out of the mine when they're heavily loaded if that direction has a slight downhill grade. The top level is played out, and no mining is done there anymore. This is obvious to anyone with mining experience (or Jake Mottlow can simply explain it, if he's along).

The ceiling is 10 feet high in most places, but it sometimes rises to 15 feet or drops to just 6 or even 5 feet.

### 10. Ore Lift and Ladder Shaft

Chains from the capstan outside the mine run through large, heavy pulleys anchored to the ceiling, then hang down through a 10-foot-wide shaft cut in the floor. The bottom — and whatever is hanging on this chain — is beyond the reach of your light.

Miners used this bucket to lift ore from below and to lower tools and other supplies to the middle level. The empty bucket can be lifted by tugging on the chain. The ceiling here is 15 feet high.

Alongside the ore lift is a smaller vertical shaft through which the miners climbed up and down.

A wooden ladder descends through a hole in the floor to a landing about 10 feet down, where a second ladder descends even farther through another hole.

This set of ladders is how the miners get to the next level down. There are five ladders and a drop of 50 feet between the top and middle levels. The ladders are scuffed and old, but perfectly safe.

## Middle Level

The middle level averages 50 feet below the top level. It's reached by climbing down a series of five ladders. Ore was loaded into large buckets that were raised on chains connected to the capstan outside the entrance. The floor has a slight slope down toward the bucket room to ease moving loaded ore carts. The middle level was being actively mined when calamity struck.

Areas **10** and **11** on this level are essentially the same as on the top level; no separate description is provided.

**Fungus bats** have taken over this level of the mine. In every chamber of the middle level, characters have a 2-in-6 chance of encountering fungus bats. Roll 1d6–3 and add the result to the number of characters in the party to determine how many bats are encountered. For example, a roll of 5 indicates bats outnumber characters by 2, and a roll of 1 indicates characters outnumber bats by 2.

**Fungus Bat:** HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d3); Move 4 (flying 18); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** fungus breath (10 ft. cone, 1d4 damage if inhaled, save avoids), stench save or retch for 1d3 rounds). (see **New Monsters**)

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### 11. Ore Lift and Ladder Shaft

This area is identical to area **10** on the top level. The only difference is that the drop between the middle and bottom levels is 80 feet, so eight ladders are used instead of five.

### 12. Tilted Gallery

The ceiling of this tunnel is 20 feet high. The floor and ceiling are level, but the walls are skewed radically, like a parallelogram. It looks as if some giant creature distorted the rock with a titanic shove after the tunnel was cut.

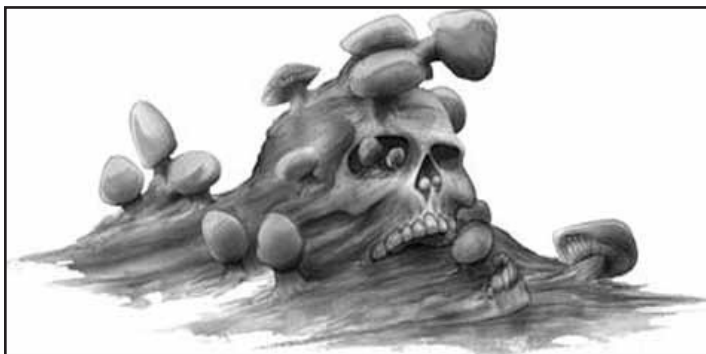
Both the right and left walls of this tunnel slant at about a 20-degree angle to the left as characters first approach the room. Characters with a background in mining realize that this is nothing more than a reflection of how the ore was distributed in the rock; squaring off the walls would have meant a lot of unnecessary digging for the miners. The slant has no other significance, but it's disorienting and creates the impression that the walls might be unstable.

### 13. Closed-off Tunnel

A sturdy wooden door sealed with a heavy, rusty padlock completely shuts off the tunnel at this point. Mildew and mold grows on the wood. It looks as if it has been here for several years at least.

This door seals off an unsafe tunnel. The miners put it here to ensure no one wandered down the passage and accidentally set off a cave-in that the mine foreman felt sure would happen. Nothing of interest is beyond the door.

In the years since the door was put in place, however, a **phycomid** has grown over the wood of the door. Anyone who tries to pick the lock or even examines it closely triggers the phycomid's attack. Once it becomes active, the fungus attacks a different target every round until destroyed.



**Phycomid:** HD 4; HP 27; AC 4[15]; Atk fluid globule (1d6 acid plus spore infection); Move 3; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** acid (20 ft. range), spore infection (save or lose 1d2 constitution; every 10 minutes thereafter, lose 1 point constitution; cure disease ends loss). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 430)

### 14. Miners

You hear a faint "tap ... tap" sound as you move along the tunnel. The sound is irregular, not rhythmic, and varies in intensity.

Two *feble-minded* miners are standing at the rock face, listlessly striking it with their hammers. They react to the characters' presence the same as all the shroom's other victims.

### 15. Mandragoras

As characters approach this area, the 5 **mandragoras** have a 2-in-6 chance of surprising the characters (1-in-6 chance if a ranger or monk is with the party). Read the following information; include the final (parenthesized) sentence if someone succeeded on the roll.

You hear a rustling sound ahead, and something darts away from your light too quickly for you to see what it was. (It was smaller than a human, and gangly, and green.)

**Mandragora (5):** HD 1; HP 7, 6, 5x2, 3; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 tentacle slaps (1d4); Move 12 (burrow 9); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** constrict (if 2 tentacles hit, hold for automatic 1d4 damage/round), light blindness, magic resistance (10%), resist fire (50%). (**Monstrosities** 173)

**Green Brain:** HD 5; HP 34; AC 3[16]; Atk none; Move 0 flying 15; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** mental abilities. (**Monstrosities** 227)

**Mental abilities:** telepathy, wide mental force cone (50 ft. long cone, 30 ft. wide at end, spells disrupted, save or become disoriented [-2 to hit for 1d3 rounds, 1-in-6 chance to drop held items]), narrow mental force cone (2d6 damage, save resists).

## Bottom Level

The bottom level is 80 feet below the middle level. It's reached by climbing down eight ladders. Ore is raised by the same capstan system that serves the middle level, and the floor has the same slope as other levels. The bottom level has been in use for only a few years, so it's not as well developed as the top and middle levels. This is where miners broke into a subterranean cave system that exposed them to russet mold and set Pezzi Zakii loose in their midst.

Area **10** and **11** on this level are essentially the same as on the middle level, but they only extend upward, not downward; no separate description is provided.

### 16. Cave-in

The tunnel ahead is completely collapsed. Rubble and shattered support timbers fill the passage. A few tools lean against the walls, as if the miners started clearing the passage, but gave up.

This cave-in occurred just one day before miners broke through into the natural cavern. Their efforts to clear this tunnel halted when they started investigating the new find. Nothing of significance is here.

### 17. Fungoid "Mule"

You hear the grinding of wooden wheels on iron rails; one of the ore carts must be moving toward you. No sooner do you realize that than you see the hulking shape of a humanoid creature emerge from the darkness. It's a bit shorter than a human — probably because of its stooped posture — but it's massively built. It's pulling a loaded ore cart with apparent ease. Its flesh has the pasty texture of a toadstool. It opens its mouth as if to roar, but no sound comes out as it drops the ore cart's chain and rushes toward you.

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The **fungoid** is moving iron ore from where the vegepygmies are digging to the bucket lift at area **10** in preparation for getting the mine operating again once Pezzi Zakii understands the smelting process. The vegepygmies haven't made much progress at learning how to mine, however, so the work is going very slowly. The fungoid attacks without hesitation.

**Fungoid:** HD 5; HP 34; AC 5[14]; Atk 2 slams (1d8); Move 6; Save 12; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** immune to charm, resist electricity (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 258)

### 18. Vegepygmy Work Party

Characters hear sounds of mining from the tunnel ahead, but they don't see any glow from lanterns or candles. If they creep forward and investigate, have them make Dex (Stealth) checks against the vegepygmies' passive Perception scores of 11, then read the boxed text. If they assume this is just more *feble-minded* miners and round the bend without any precautions, the vegepygmies hear them coming and are prepared for a fight.

The creatures in the tunnel are nothing like the miners you've encountered so far. They're humanoid, but only as large as halflings, and they appear to be made entirely of plant material. But unlike the other plant creatures you've encountered, these are more fully formed. They have smooth flesh, something that might pass for hair, and distinct faces. They wield tools like miners, though not very well.

If characters achieved surprise, it won't last long. The vegepygmies notice them within a round unless the characters retreat out of sight immediately.

The work party consists of 6 **vegepygmy workers** and 4 **vegepygmy guards**. A **green brain** is stationed farther up the tunnel; it joins the vegepygmies on the second round of a fight.

**Vegepygmy Workers (6):** HD 1; HP 8, 7x2, 6x2, 5; AC 3[16]; Atk strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Guards (4):** HD 2; HP 15, 13x2, 10; AC 3[16]; Atk strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

**Equipment:** spear.

**Green Brain:** HD 5; HP 37; AC 3[16]; Atk none; Move 0 flying 15; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** mental abilities. (*Monstrosities* 227)

**Mental abilities:** telepathy, wide mental force cone (50 ft. long cone, 30 ft. wide at end, spells disrupted, save or become disoriented [-2 to hit for 1d3 rounds, 1-in-6 chance to drop held items]), narrow mental force cone (2d6 damage, save resists).

### 19. "The Breakthrough"

This tunnel is just like most others in the mine, up to a point. Then it suddenly widens into a much larger natural cavern. The chamber is larger than your lights can illuminate — probably much larger, judging from the echoes — but you can see stalagmites and stalactites, and can hear the sound of splashing water in the distance. The air is completely still and has a rich, earthy scent. A single point of light in the distance breaks the all-encompassing darkness.

No immediate danger is here at the entrance to the shroom's cavern. A character who studies the point of light and rolls below his intelligence on 3d6 notices that the light flickers occasionally, as if something moved between it and the viewer.

## The Under Realms

Before the miners stumbled onto this cavern, nothing lived here but Pezzi Zakii and a handful of its minions — mandragoras, green brains, fungoids, fungus bats — along with a few vegepygmies that tended the patches of russet mold. The miners' discovery changed the whole world for these creatures.

As characters explore the cavern, roll 1d20 per hour for an encounter if they move in darkness; roll every 10 minutes if they bring a light source. If they haven't encountered russet mold by the third roll, then they trigger that encounter automatically when it's time for the third check. Characters have the normal chance to surprise foes in darkness, but none if they're carrying a light.

Note that the scale changes between the mine map and the cavern map, from 100 feet per hex to 660 feet (220 yards) per hex. In the cavern, 4 hexes are half a mile. The floor is uneven everywhere and in many places it's wet or strewn with rubble, so the whole cavern should be considered difficult going for cross-country travel.

#### 1d20 Encounter

1–7 None

8–9 2d8 fungus bats

10–12 1d4 patches of russet mold

13 2d4 mandragoras, 1 green brain

14 1d2 fungoids

15–17 Vegepygmy Work Crew: 8 workers, 2 guards

18–19 Vegepygmy Patrol: 4 guards, 1 chief

20 Vegepygmy Band: 14 workers, 8 guards, 1 chief

**Fungoid:** HD 5; HP 34; AC 5[14]; Atk 2 slams (1d8); Move 6; Save 12; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** immune to charm, resist electricity (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 258)

**Fungus Bat:** HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d3); Move 4 (flying 18); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** fungus breath (10 ft. cone, 1d4 damage if inhaled, save avoids), stench save or retch for 1d3 rounds). (see **New Monsters**)

**Mandragoras (2d4):** HD 1; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 tentacle slaps (1d4); Move 12 (burrow 9); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** constrict (if 2 tentacles hit, hold for automatic 1d4 damage/round), light blindness, magic resistance (10%), resist fire (50%). (*Monstrosities* 173)

**Green Brain:** HD 5; AC 3[16]; Atk none; Move 0 flying 15; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** mental abilities. (*Monstrosities* 227)

**Mental abilities:** telepathy, wide mental force cone (50 foot long cone, 30 feet wide at end, spells disrupted, save or become disoriented [-2 to hit for 1d3 rounds, 1-in-6 chance to drop held items]), narrow mental force cone (2d6 damage, save resists).

**Russet Mold (Hazard):** A russet mold releases a cloud of spores when anyone comes within 5 ft. of the patch. Anyone caught in the spore cloud must make a saving throw or take 2d6 points of damage. Anyone killed by the russet mold rises as a vegepygmy within 24 hours. (see **New Monsters**)

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**Vegepygmy Worker:** HD 1; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 17; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Guard:** HD 2; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 16; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Chief:** HD 6; HP 42; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 16; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%), spore cloud (40 foot spread, save or paralyzed for 2d6 rounds). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

## 20. Miners

If characters aren't carrying light sources, or they extinguish their lights for a while to scan the cavern in complete darkness, they notice a pinpoint of light at this location from anywhere in the cavern. If they're carrying lights, then they don't notice the candle flame until they get within 500 yards of area 20. Read the description below when they get within 200 yards.

As you draw closer to the light, you see that it's a small lantern holding a candle. Near the light is a large cage made of long bones lashed together with sinew. Six filthy, emaciated miners are crammed inside. Nearby, nine more miners stand idly in a slack-jawed stupor. Four of the green plant-men stand guard.

The nine miners have been *feble-minded* and are effectively useless. Those in the cage are the only six remaining who haven't been *feble-minded* or transformed into vegepygmies. They're very weak from hunger and thirst because Zakii has been starving them slowly while threatening to erase their minds or douse them with russet mold in an effort to wring the secrets of smelting iron from them. They can fill characters in on what they know, which is the discovery of this cavern, the first deaths from russet mold, and the increasing attacks from vegepygmies and plant creatures that eventually overwhelmed the camp. They'll fight if characters insist, but they'd rather just get far away from here.

If someone checks at this point, they realize that Pezzi Zakii isn't with the group anymore. It slipped away as they approached this area, knowing that it would be recognized and its secret revealed by the prisoners. From this point on, it organizes its forces to ambush the characters at an appropriate time and place.

**Miners (6):** HD 1; HP 2; AC 9[10]; **Atk** fist (1hp); **Move** 12; **Save** 17; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 1/15; **Special:** none.  
**Equipment:** none.

## 21. Vegepygmy Camp

Ahead is a patch of gigantic mushrooms 10 to 15 feet high with enormous caps that spread like canopies. Child-sized plant-men are moving among them, interacting, gathering water from pools in the rock, fashioning baskets and primitive weapons, and communicating without speaking. There are no lights and no structures, yet the scene resembles a surreal vision of a human village from a fever-dream.

These vegepygmies don't expect intruders, so characters have an easy time sneaking close enough to get a good look — provided they aren't flashing around an open light. The "village" contains 1 **vegepygmy chief**, 8 **guards**, and 14 **workers/commoners**. If characters approach openly, or at least not aggressively, the vegepygmies are puzzled to see strangers and don't immediately attack. Their puzzlement won't last long, however, especially if characters ask nosy questions. If characters attack, the vegepygmies grab their weapons and fight back effectively. If characters are noticed but they leave the campsite without starting a fight, three vegepygmy guards follow them while trying to keep hidden, and eventually the chief organizes an ambush.

**Vegepygmy Chief:** HD 6; HP 45; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 16; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%), spore cloud (40 ft. spread, save or paralyzed for 2d6 rounds). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Guard (8):** HD 2; HP 15, 14, 13x2, 12, 10x2, 9; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 16; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Worker (14):** HD 1; HP 8, 7x2, 6x3, 5x3, 4x2, 3x3; AC 3[16]; **Atk** strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); **Move** 12; **Save** 17; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 2/30; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)  
**Equipment:** spear.

## 22. Pezzi Zakii's Lair

Toadstools grow to a height of 10 or 15 feet here, but they aren't haphazard; their careful spacing and arrangement makes them look cultivated. With slender stalks and large, graceful caps, they almost create an impression of being laid out in "rooms" — an impression strengthened by the thick, low furniture arranged beneath them, and the "tables" and "desks" built around the toadstool stalks. Desks contain platters of unfamiliar food, parchment scrolls, stone cups for holding ink, and writing implements carved from delicate stalactites or quills plucked from some subterranean monstrosity. Many surface plants that look out of place in this underground setting somehow thrive in the eternal darkness.

The shroom's lair is nothing resembling a human dwelling. The temperature never varies in the cavern, and the shroom fears no wind or predator, so Zakii has no need for walls. Seven giant toadstools are arranged with one (the largest) in the center and the other six in a rough hexagonal shape around it. The wide toadstool caps protect parchment and cloth against water from the cavern ceiling far above. Darkvision eliminates the need for lights in general, but Zakii keeps a few simple floating wick-type oil lamps handy (but unlit) in case it needs to see something in color.

If Pezzi Zakii has already abandoned the characters (because they found the prisoners, for example), it will be encountered here. If it's still with the characters, it turns against them, commanding its plant minions to attack, and then unleashes a *magic missile* or *lightning bolt* on the characters. Its reinforcements arrive as listed below. Zakii quickly retreats into the darkness and fights from the shadows until its hit points drop below 10. It then flees for its life toward Area 22. Its minions fight to the death.

Round	Creatures
1	2 giant violet fungi (limited mobility thanks to Pezzi Zakii)
2	5 mandragoras, 1 green brain
3	1 fungoid
5	all surviving vegepygmies from <b>Area 21</b>

**Fungoid:** HD 5; HP 36; AC 5[14]; Atk 2 slams (1d8); Move 6; Save 12; AL N; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** immune to charm, resist electricity (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 258)

**Giant Violet Fungi (Mobile) (2):** HD 6; HP 45, 40; AC 7[12]; Atk 4 tendrils (rot); Move 6; Save 11; AL N; CL/XP 7/600; **Special:** rot (save resists). (*Monstrosities* 183)

**Mandragora (5):** HD 1; HP 7, 6x3, 5; AC 3[16]; Atk 2 tentacle slaps (1d4); Move 12 (burrow 9); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** constrict (if 2 tentacles hit, hold for automatic 1d4 damage/round), light blindness, magic resistance (10%), resist fire (50%). (*Monstrosities* 173)

**Green Brain:** HD 5; HP 33; AC 3[16]; Atk none; Move 0 flying 15; Save 12; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** mental abilities. (*Monstrosities* 227)

**Mental abilities:** telepathy, wide mental force cone (50 ft. long cone, 30 ft. wide at end, spells disrupted, save or become disoriented [-2 to hit for 1d3 rounds, 1-in-6 chance to drop held items]), narrow mental force cone (2d6 damage, save resists).

**Vegepygmy Chief:** HD 6; HP 45; AC 3[16]; Atk strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%), spore cloud (40 ft. spread, save or paralyzed for 2d6 rounds). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Guard (8):** HD 2; HP 15, 14, 13x2, 12, 10x2, 9; AC 3[16]; Atk strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

**Equipment:** spear.

**Vegepygmy Worker (14):** HD 1; HP 8, 7x2, 6x3, 5x3, 4x2, 3x3; AC 3[16]; Atk strike (1d4) or spear (1d6); Move 12; Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** immune to electricity, resists piercing weapons (50%). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

**Equipment:** spear.

**Pezzi Zakii (Shroom):** HD 6+1; HP 43; AC 6[13]; Atk weapon (1d8); Move 9; Save 11; AL C; CL/XP 8/800; **Special:** control plants, plant growth, spells (4/2/2). (*Monstrosities* 424)

**Spells:** 1st—charm person, detect magic, magic missile, sleep; 2nd—invisibility, phantasmal force; 3rd—hold person, lightning bolt.

**Treasure:** Zakii does not value or hoard gold or silver, but a basket beneath one of the tables contains one blue spinel (500 gp), an amber and a tourmaline (100 gp each), six bloodstones (50 gp each), one carnelian (50 gp), and five moonstones (50 gp each). A second basket contains a *potion of diminution* and a *potion of clairvoyance* in sealed clay bottles. The scrolls containing Zakii's observations and notes on natural philosophy (about 20 in all, written in Aklo) are worth 10 gp apiece to scholars who study the Under Realms.

## 23. Exit to Deeper Down

A tunnel exits the cavern here, leading deeper into the Under Realms. It plays no part in this adventure, but you can map and populate the deeper caves however you like.

## Concluding the Adventure

Miners and characters feebleminded by the shroom's toxic flesh are restored to normal by dispel magic (6th level caster), or by making a successful saving throw (with a -2 penalty) after every 30 days. Eventually, everyone recovers and the mine reopens — with the entrance to Zakii's cavern collapsed and guarded.

If Pezzi Zakii escaped, it harbors a burning hatred for the characters. It could take months or years for it to develop a suitably devious revenge plan, but it eventually strikes back at the characters. If it learned the secret of smelting iron, it could return at the head of an army of vegepygmies and fungoids wielding iron weapons and wearing heavy iron armor!

## New Monsters

### Fungus Bat

**Hit Dice:** 2

**Armor Class:** 7[12]

**Attacks:** bite (1d3)

**Saving Throw:** 16

**Special:** fungus breath, stench

**Move:** 4 (flying 18)

**Alignment:** Neutrality

**Number Encountered:** 1d4+2, 3d6

**Challenge Level:** 3/60

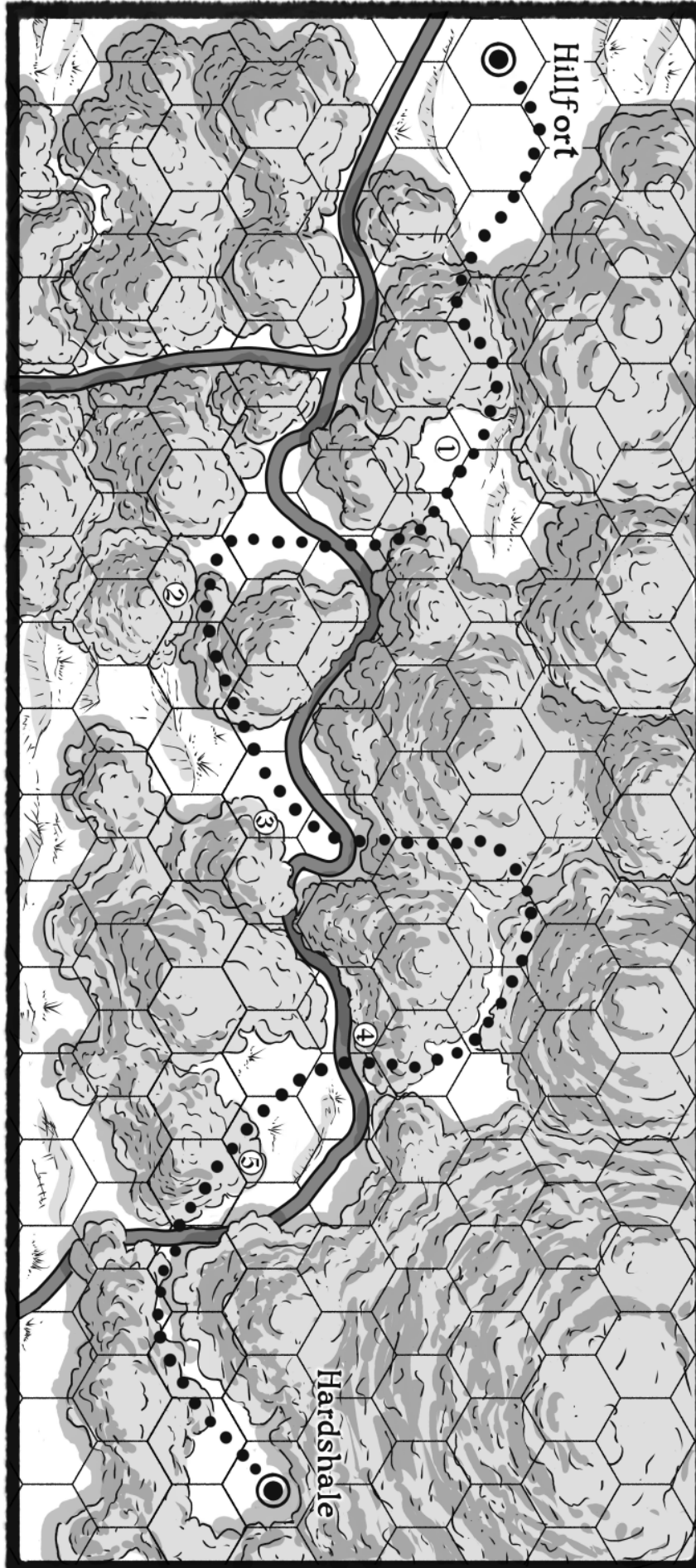
Fungus bats are slightly-larger-than-normal bats infected by a fungal disease growing on and within their bodies. Every 1d4 rounds, the bats can breathe a cloud of fungus within a 10ft radius. Anyone inhaling this fungal matter must make a saving throw or suffer 1d4 points of damage. A cloud off fungus bats exudes a horrible stench that forces anyone within their midst to make a saving throw or retch for 1d3 rounds,

**Fungus Bat:** HD 2; AC 7[12]; Atk bite (1d3); Move 4 (flying 18); Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; **Special:** fungus breath (10 ft. cone, 1d4 damage if inhaled, save avoids), stench save or retch for 1d3 rounds).

### Russet Mold (Hazard)

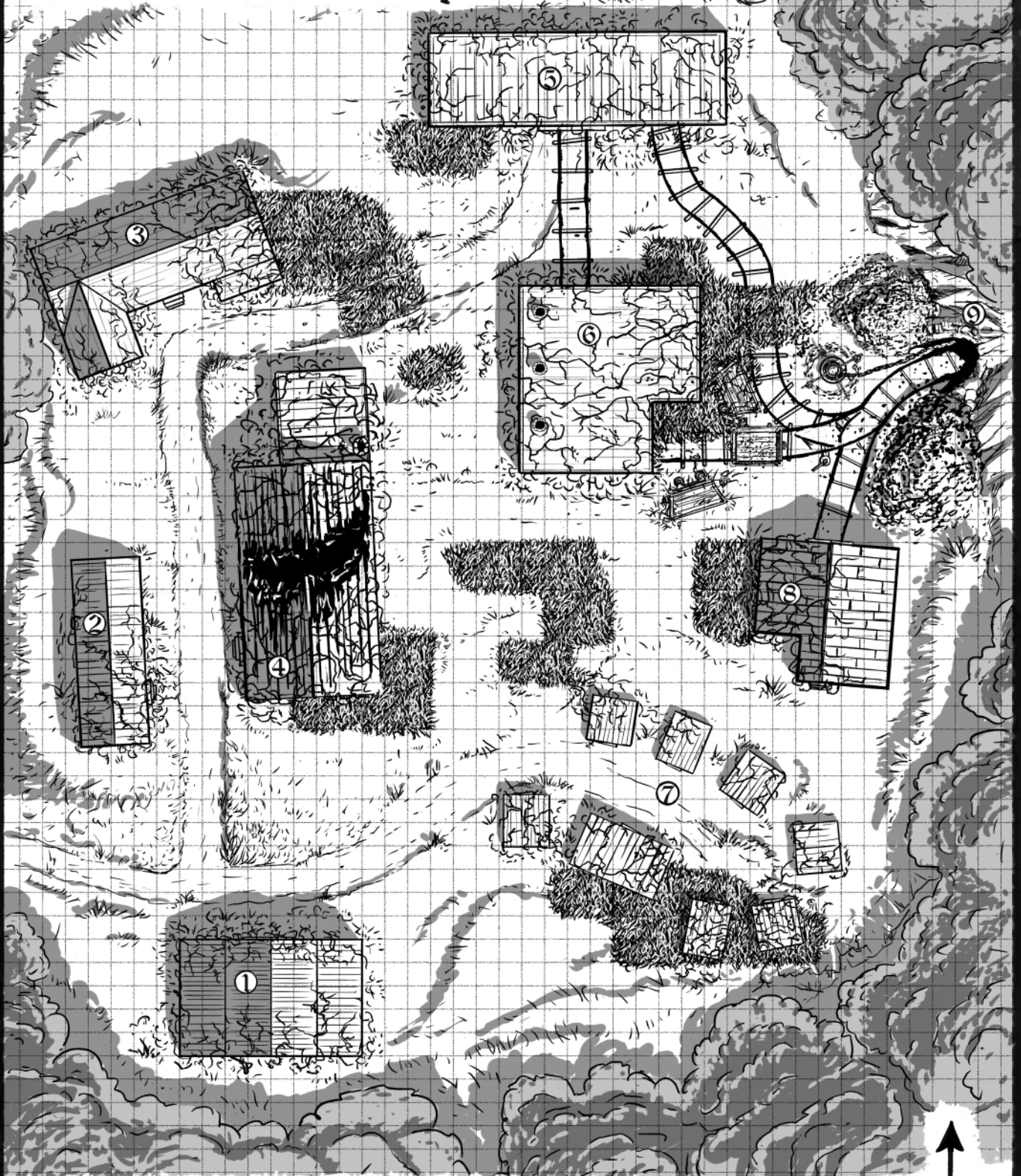
Russet mold grows in wet, dark areas, appearing to be ordinary rust from 30 feet away (2-in-6 chance). A russet mold patch grows to be about 5 feet to 7 feet in diameter. The mold releases a cloud of spores when anyone comes within 5 feet of it. All in the area must make a saving throw or take 2d6 points of damage. Anyone killed by a russet mold rises as a vegepygmy in 24 hours.

CAVE OF IRON



Cave of Iron

# Hardshale Camp



- |                   |                          |                     |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Barn & Stables | 4. Kitchen & Dining Hall | 7. Storage Sheds    |
| 2. Bunkhouse      | 5. Ore Shed              | 8. Maintenance Shed |
| 3. Tavern         | 6. Smelter               | 9. Mine Entrance    |



# CAVE OF IRON

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QoD4i

# Quests of Doom 4

## Cave of Iron

Cave of Iron is an adventure intended for characters of 1st to 3rd level. The town of Hillfort has a thriving copper and iron mining business known as the Hardshale Mine. The monthly wagon train from the mine is three weeks overdue and riders sent to investigate are now four days overdue. Now the mayor of Hillfort is looking for some capable adventurers to investigate her problems.



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ISBN 978-1-62283-456-3

