

Hivers III

A long, arched stone tunnel with a cobblestone floor. The walls are made of rough-hewn stone, and the ceiling is a smooth brick arch. On the right side, there is a series of warm, yellowish lights mounted on the wall. The floor is made of large, flat stones. At the far end of the tunnel, there is a bright blue light source, possibly a window or a door. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and ancient.

STARS
WITHOUT NUMBER
COMPATIBLE

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Introduction

This adventure is the third part of a series. Each part can be played individually with a new set of player characters or they can be strung together to form the start of a campaign.

In Part I the characters were instrumental in bringing a hostile insectoid race to a world already suffering a global famine.

In Part II the same hostile race had established a foothold in a remote polar region and the characters were dispatched to deal with the alien threat.

In Part III an entire city is threatened with being overrun. The characters are called upon again to investigate.

This is intended as a drop in adventure. You can play this out on any world you do not mind inflicting a global famine and a plague of aliens on.

At the end of Part I the Hivers spaceship exploded in the upper atmosphere scattering eggs. One of those eggs has found its way into the city's sewer system.

Gathering the Characters

If you are continuing on from previous Hivers adventures, then the Bessie Powall will continue as the characters primary contact.

For new characters there are two suggested approaches. Bessie Powall is a fan of trumping up criminal charges against off-worlders, and then offering to make those charges go away if the characters do her a favor. This current political situation makes this strategy particularly useful.

As a little background, due to the severe rationing of food there has been a lot of anti-off-worlder sentiment along the lines of "these people are eating food that should go to 'locals'", others are accused of running black market operations and profiteering from the planets misfortune. A few others believe rumors that the famine

was caused but a plague brought to the planet by off-worlders.

Any one, or all, of these are enough turn a minor insult or accident into justification to start a fight, steal their food or other possessions and generally take out months of fear and want on a convenient target.

Alternatively, the characters could just be hired as freelance investigators or security contractors. The authorities don't want knowledge of the Hivers activities to cause a panic amongst an already threatened population.

However the characters are gathered they will be given the same briefing.

Security forces have picked up intermittent broadcasts from planet to an unidentified orbital target. The broadcasts come and go so fast that tracking them to closer than inside the city is proving impossible.

One research group has a hypothesis that by mapping the broadcast pulses with local seismic activity that there is a correlating tremor to each pulse. The tremors are so small that only the most sensitive seismographs have picked them up, no one would have felt them. The city is nowhere near any kind of fault line or volcanic region. Overlaying the epicenter of the tremor with the city map leads the researchers to a suggestion that the city's sewers and subterranean service tunnels are being used as a massive antenna.

The mission is to investigate the service tunnels, storerooms and sewer system and either eradicate the aliens if they are found or report back if the threat is too big.

The characters will be provided with a digital map of the service tunnels and any equipment they feel they need.

Hiver Biology

The truly unique thing about the Hiver race is their biological life cycle. It is not unusual for insectoid species to change form just as a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

Hivers have five life stages. They start as eggs and when they hatch they are a tiny fraction of their adult size and take an hour to two to pump blood into their wings and expand their body cavities to their full size. A Hiver egg is 20cm diameter and 50cm-60cm tall. An adult Hiver is approximately 2m tall.

Once reaching the adult stage Hivers can pupate and change their body configuration. There are four genders of Hiver. The first is a Worker. These cannot fly but their saliva can soften chitin so that it can be reshaped and repurposed.

The second gender is that of the drone. Drone have the same saliva glands but also have waspish wings and can fly.

The third gender is the soldier. Soldiers have the wings of the drone but are stronger and faster.

Finally, the queen is an almost immobile egg laying machine. She can lay an egg every 10 minutes under optimal conditions.

Hivers can pupate, a process that takes 4 to 6 hours and change their body configuration at any time. This involves building a cocoon and sealing themselves in. Once they emerge, they are fully functioning members of that gender.

Any Hiver soldier or drone can fertilize Hiver eggs. Just one Hiver could build a nest as a worker, pupate into a queen and lay hundreds of eggs then pupate again into a worker or drone to tend the eggs. Eggs take approximately 14hrs to hatch.

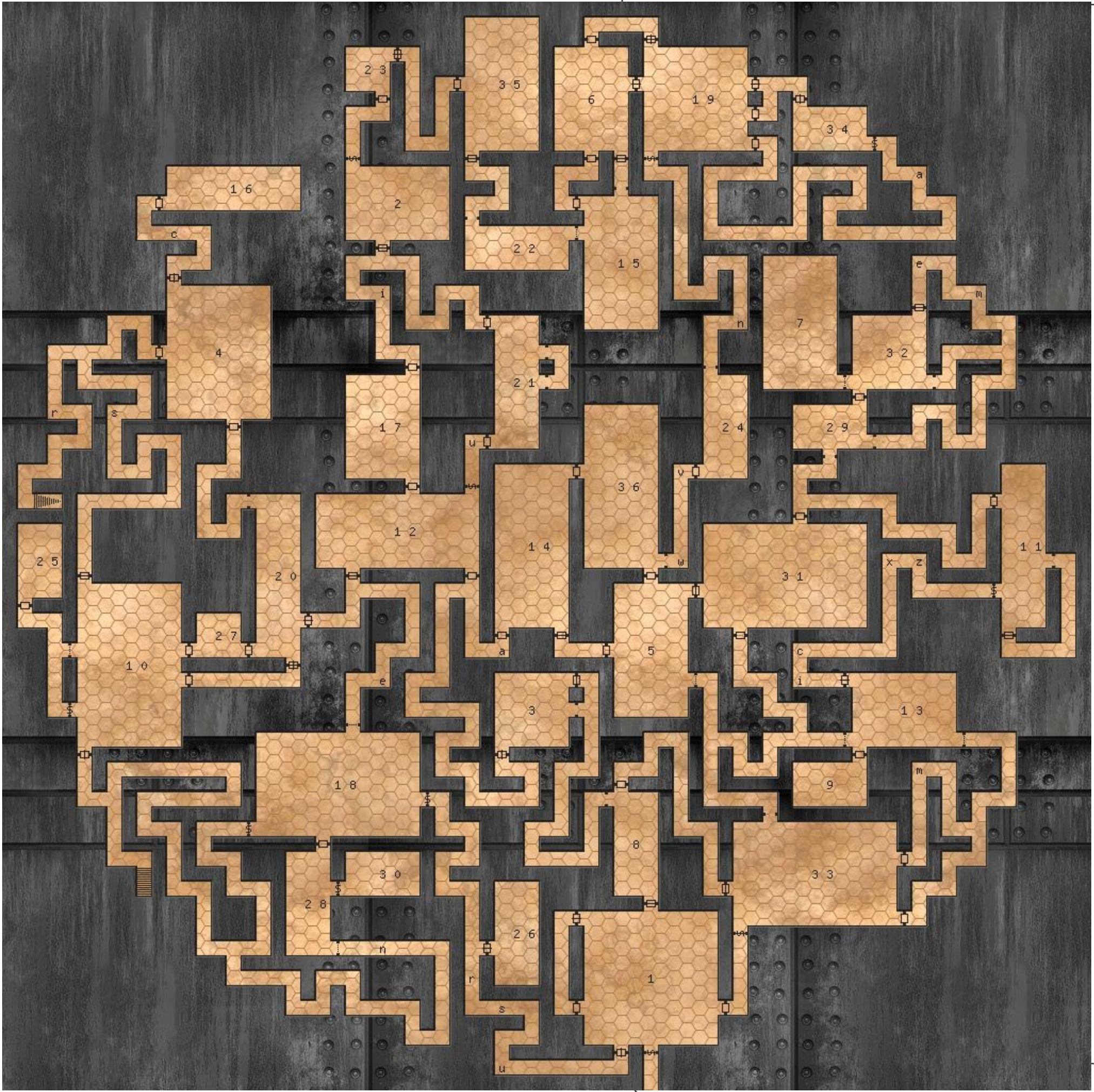
In this way even a single surviving Hiver can repopulate an entire nest or colony.

Hivers feed of f of the bodily fluids of mammals. Any mammal will do. They inject a paralyzing saliva that also includes an anti-coagulant. Then over a number of days they will drain all the fluids from every part of the victim. Most die from shock long before they are fully drained.

Hivers are known to eat their own and a squadron of Hiver soldiers will eat their

own fallen brethren after a battle. This preserves the nutrients and strategically prevents their losses being apparent. Not that Hivers ever think about losses and losing.

Hiver soldiers tend to travel in single file when on foot or in swarms when in the air. Their strategy almost exclusively relies on massively superior numbers as losses have no meaning to them.



A submarine style hatch with large locking wheel.



Iris Seal controlled by PIN code touch pad.



Sliding door operated by a motion sensor when anything moves within 2m of the door.



Sliding Door operated by a PIN code touch pad.



Stairs up to an emergency exit at street level.



Stairs down to sewers

Going Underground

True to their word the characters will be provided with anything they feel they need.

Not every room on the map is detailed. This is not intended to be a dungeon crawl, killing the monsters and taking their stuff!

The secret is to try and maintain the sense of this being a horror themed adventure.

There are three atmospheric events that you can play on the characters.

In addition, there are 13 set items dotted around the corridors, six random encounters, six moveable rooms you can put in the characters path and some fixed detailed rooms.

The important thing is to try and maintain a sense of cat and mouse. The characters are going into the heart of enemy territory. If they haven't faced Hivers before they do not know what they are facing. If they have, then they will be expecting a veritable swarm once the alarm is raised.

Event I

All the lights blink twice and then snap off. This is accompanied with the fading away of a background hum, which had previously not been noticed as it was simply the constant and 'normal' hum of the lighting and ventilation systems.

Event II

A vibration starts to be felt, as seen in the form of ripples and agitation in the water in the bottom of the corridors. The vibration builds and with it a sound that starts with a rumble and builds to a ear splitting screech before becoming a whine and then finally going out of hearing frequency range. Even when it cannot be heard it can still be seen in reflective surfaces that appear blurred due to vibration and liquids that are agitated into interference patterns. After a minute or two there is a palpable feeling of relief as the vibrations stop. This is the alien signal being sent that was the reason for the mission.

Event III

If the lights have already failed, in event I, they will suddenly flicker back in to life, just for a second and then fail into darkness, come on again for a couple of seconds, and then fail, come on again for a whole minute and then fail.

The Entrance

The entrance is (bottom of map, center) is via a secured Iris Valve hatch. There is PIN code 1-7-9-3-5 and opening the hatch immediately releases a truly foul stench.

City Service Tunnels

These tunnels are made of rivetted steel plates with a non-slip grid or mesh floor. There are strip lights at human shoulder height. Each light is 3 m long, 10 cm tall and stands about 10cm proud of the wall. They give off a harsh blue/white light. Approximately one in ten of these lights flickers intermittently.

There are pools of water all along the floor, the walls are wet on many places. Occasionally there are plant roots hanging from the ceiling where they have penetrated from the ground above.

A constant dripping sound can be heard everywhere inside the tunnels. Sounds echo down the tunnels.

Tunnels

- a A foul odor fills the corridor
- c A foul odor fills the corridor
- e A steel plate has come away from the ceiling here and plant roots as well as electrical wiring hangs down into the tunnel.
- i The tunnel here is deeply gouged and scraped along its length.
- m Anti Off-Worlder graffiti covers the tunnel walls here.
- n A ventilation duct in the ceiling brings down the sounds from the street above.

r Corpses have been sealed into the wall with wax along the tunnel, a dozen in all. They look like a maintenance crew.

s An emergency services SOS phone is fixed to the wall here. The light above it flickers on and off.

u Some maintenance work was in progress here. Wall sections have been removed revealing masses of cables and connections and blinking LEDs.

v A steel grill blocks this tunnel. There is a gate in it, secured by a traditional padlock that is rusted solid.

w There is a recently dead body huddled to one side of the tunnel. It looks like a vagrant went to sleep and never woke up.

x Acrid fumes hang in the air in this tunnel. You can see a blue haze in the air and it smells of chlorine and ozone. It will cause coughing and burning eyes but no lasting effects.

z Discarded cocoon shells have blocked the water flow along this tunnel leading to a buildup of water about 50 cm deep along its length.

Random Encounters

1 Hiver Workers (as many as there are characters) approach from ahead.

2 Two drones carrying a dead body approach (they are going to wax it to a tunnel wall).

3 A Hiver Soldier is part of a regular patrol. It will be missed in a matter of minutes if it doesn't return.

4 A squadron of Hiver soldiers, (half as many as there are characters) flying in single file.

5 A pair of Hiver workers hurrying alone the tunnel.

6 A Hiver Soldier investigating the scent of the characters, it will track the party until it knows if they are food or foe then raise the alarm.

Room #1

Environmental suits line the east wall and bench seats run north south in the center of the room. This is where sewer workers would suit up before work. Lockers line the west wall. North Entry Locked
Simple Wooden Door (superior lock)

The looping corridor on to the west are communal showers with showerheads high on both walls.

There are the bloody remains of a security officers' uniform in the corner, but no body.

Room #4

A grey chitinous mass sits here, it seems to have embedded itself into the power grid system. It expands and contracts slowly every two to three minutes.

Room #5

This room contains a Hiver Queen and three times as many Hiver Drones as there are characters.

Room #6

A central mass of hexagonal cells made of grey chitin with yellowish wax seals. Inside can be seen the semi liquid forms of pupating Hivers.

Room #7

This is a control room for water pumping equipment. Many of the consoles are burnt out as if they caught fire from the inside. Nothing seems to be working.

Room#12

The center of this room is taken up by a huge black grey mass of chitin embedded into which is all sorts of electronic equipment. This is the hivers interface been the worlds tech and their own organic brain. It is the origin of the broadcast signal. The mass can be seen to breathe occasionally. There are dozens of power cables ripped from walls and the ceiling feeding into this mass.

Room #14

This is a larder. The walls and ceiling are lined with bodies held in place by yellow wax. Many can be seen to show very faint

signs of life, although the enzymes they have been injected with mean that they will die within a matter of hours should they be removed. No one will recover consciousness if cut out of the wax. These bodies are being used for feeding newly hatched eggs and the queen in Room #5.

Room #36

The walls of this room are completely lined with hiver eggs. Each egg is about 20cm across and 60cm tall and colored like a grain of rice.

Significant Others

These are not rooms but features. It is not expected that anyone is going to trail around the entire underground complex. You can use these features to add interesting things to the rooms that the characters actually visit.

Security Monitors

This room has four desks each facing eight monitors that show tunnel sections from all angles. Watching for more than 30 seconds reveals that the screens flick from camera to camera and it is almost impossible to identify which cameras are showing what.

(use the random encounters to populate a few Hivers on to the screens).

Fire Control

This room contains fire and hazardous material protection suits, foam and inert gas fire extinguishers, big axes and breathing apparatus.

Sickbay

Two or three medical trolleys with mobile

- 1 Half as many Hiver Workers as there are characters.
- 2 An aquatic predator - think alien alligator.
- 3 Half as many Hiver Drones as there are characters.
- 4 An equal number of Hiver Drones as there are characters.
- 5 Tentacle horror
- 6 An equal number of Hiver Soldiers as there are characters.

medical gear like heart rate monitors,

ultrasound scanner and the all-important defibrillator.

Maintenance

The room contains professional quality tool cabinets, on wheels, as well as work benches and wall mounted heavier equipment like grinders and presses. The walls are veritably plastered in health and safety notices.

Massacre Room

A fight tool place in this room, the walls are splattered with blood and gore and there is a thick bloody trail across the floor and out one of the exits. The trail will be lost in the standing water in the next tunnel.

Gunfight Room

There are a few scraps of uniform here that look like city security forces. There is a lot of spend brass bullet cases on the floor and the far walls are riddled with bullet pock marks.

Where are the Hivers?

In the south west of the service tunnels is a staircase down to the sewer levels. The sewers are circular pipes. They are not mapped use can use this table to auto generate them.

1-2	Sewer continues straight ahead
3	Side sewer joins from the left.
4	Side sewer joins from the right
5	Sewer contracts by 30cm
6	Sewer expands by 30cm

The sewers start 2m in diameter. As the characters wander around, they will discover many side tunnels. The numbers down the

center of these pages will give you probably more than enough random numbers generate a significant sewer system.

Use the numbers top to bottom but when reading left to right you get a double (11, 22, 33 etc.) treat this as a random encounter from the table below.

If the double is odd (11, 33, 55) the encounter approaches from the rear.

If the double is even (22, 44, 66) the encounter approaches from the front.

If the double is below 40 (11, 22, 33) any Hivers are empty handed and are on their way out of the nest.

If the double is above 40 (44, 55, 66) any Hivers are carrying the bodies of people snatched off the street. They are unconscious but alive. Although they could well drown if dropped into the sewer during any confrontation!

Encounters with the aquatic predator does not have to be an immediate combat. It could simply start to track the characters, rolling this multiple times could bring a pack of alien style alligators drifting after the characters. Alternatively, the predator could take one look at the characters and flee into the murky water.

The tentacle horror is some sort of mutated quid or octopus that is hundreds of meters long and extends down many tunnels. It is likely to try and grab a character and drag them away into the darkness. The creature does not need to be seen, it could simply be a movement under the black water and sludge of the sewers. Any damage inflicted on it will make it let go of its prey and retract that tentacle, for now.

The sewers are much older than the service complex above, some parts go back to the early days of the city. They are typically not perfectly circular tubes but have a slightly wider diameter for the top half than the bottom half and the 'join' forms a narrow walkway ledge on one side or the other. These walkways will often be wet, slippery and any lights will small, bad tempered lizards (consider them the planets answer to rats, but these things can run upside down on the ceiling).

You should be able to run an entire underground exploration just using these random tables. If you run out of numbers,

5 1 then just start that the bottom again and
1 3 work up the columns.

3 2 What will happen eventually is that all the
4 2 tunnels become too small to navigate.
4 3 Without going on ones belly and slithering
2 5 along. This is something that the hivers are
4 4 perfectly prepared to do.

2 3 The only way in or out of this complex for
1 5 player characters is via the exits detailed in
4 2 the service level.
1 3

6 6 **Running Hivers III**

3 4 The most sensible thing to do is for the
5 6 characters to report back as soon as they
3 4 realize that nearly everyone is dead and get
4 5 the military to deal with the infestation.

4 3 For the Game Master this adventure is all
5 2 about trying to maintain the sense of threat
6 5 posed by the Hiver invasion. You can have
6 5 Hiver soldiers building up on every side as
5 3 they surround the characters before finally
5 3 mounting an attack in the pitch black after
5 4 the lights have failed.

3 6 The intended vibe is that of a game of cat
2 1 and mouse. You can use sound, most of the
3 1 tunnels are both wet, so footsteps can
2 1 splash and echoey due to their metal
2 5 construction so sounds will be distorted
3 2 and will carry a long way.

3 6 Having the Hiver signal emitting brain give
1 1 out its signal when they [the characters]
1 6 are in the room with both announce it as
1 4 the source of the signal but it can also be
5 5 used to deafen the characters for a period
4 5 of time, during which they will not be able
6 4 to hear each other or approaching danger.
4 6 When you are in the room it is ear
3 5 bleedingly loud if not "pass out on the floor
5 5 and come around only being able to hear
1 4 a roaring in your ears" loud.

6 4 **Concluding Hivers III**

1 5 The perfect solution to this adventure is get
3 1 in, find the source of the signal, destroy it
1 3 and get out alive.

3 3 Those criteria can be impressed upon the
1 1 characters either at the start or if they make
periodic reports back to the surface.

NPC Roster

Bessie Powall

Bessie Powall

Naval Officer

Class and Style	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	HP	Atk.	Bon.
Expert (Nimble)	10 (+0)	14 (+1)	12 (+0)	11 (+0)	9 (+0)	7 (-1)	4	+0	

Skills: Administer-0, Talk-0,
Connect-0, Perform-0

Focus: Specialist/Sneak
Assassin



Hivers

Hiver Worker

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Pack Hunter	2	14	+2	1d6	15m	9	+1	14+

Hiver Soldier

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Limb Novelty: Wings

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Pack Hunter	2	14	+2	1d6	15m	9	+1	14+

Hiver Drone

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Humanoid

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: Claws

Size: Calf-sized

Predator: Hunts in kin-group packs

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Small Pack Hunter	1	13	+1	1d4	15m	8	+1	15+

Hiver Queen

Basic Animal Features: *Insect*,

Body Plan: Bulbous

Skin Novelty: Exoskeleton

Main Weapon: none

Size: greater than Elephant-sized

Prey: Breeds at tremendous rates

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Terrifying Apex Predator	8	16	-	-	20m	9	+2	11+

Tentacle Horror

Basic Animal Features: *Reptile*,
Body Plan: Many legged, tentacles,
Skin Novelty: wet and slimy
Main Weapon: Bashing tentacles, Teeth Mandibles
Size: Elephant-sized or larger
Predator: Hunts as a lone, powerful hunter

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Terrifying Apex Predator	8	16	+8 x 2	1d10 each	20m	9	+2	11+

Aquatic Predator

Basic Animal Features: *Reptile*,
Body Plan: Quadruped
Skin Novelty: Thick Thermal Protective Coat/Camouflage
Main Weapon: Teeth
Size: Calf-sized
Predator: They're vicious if threatened

Beast Type	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Move	ML	Skills	Saves
Large Aggressive Prey Animal	5	13	+4	1d10	15m	8	+1	12+