

PLAGUE FAMINE & WAR III



OSRIC™ COMPATIBLE

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This adventure has been writing using the rules and specifically variations of the monsters in the OSRIC rules compendium.

It can be played with most varieties of 0D&D and B/X versions of the game.

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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 port city already in the grip of famine.

In Part II the same hostile race had established a foothold in a mountainous region that was vital to the cities dwindling food supplies and the characters were dispatched to deal with the alien threat.

In Part III the 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 in any coastal city you do not mind inflicting a famine and a plague of monsters on.

At the end of Part I the Plague, Famine & War at least one 'Hiver', the invading insectoid species, escaped and has seeded a growing infestation and even a single egg can turn into an entire hive. 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 Mara Lindwurm will continue as the characters primary contact.

For new characters there are two suggested approaches. Mara Lindwurm is a fan of trumping up criminal charges foreigners, 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 xenophobic 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 city's misfortune. A few others believe rumors that the famine was caused but a plague brought to the city by foreigners.

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, read that as disposable, or sell swords. The city council don't want knowledge of the Hivers activities to cause a panic amongst an already threatened population.

How ever the characters are gathered they will be given the same briefing.

The council's advisors have picked up intermittent bursts of magic from the city that seems to radiate out in all directions. The pulses come and go so fast that detecting the source of them to closer than inside the city is proving impossible.

One religious group has a hypothesis that by mapping the magical pulses with fluctuations in earth magic levels that there is a correlating magical spike to each burst. The tremors are so small that only the most sensitive priests have picked them up, no one would have felt them. The city is not known as a center of earth magic, ley lines or arcane nodes. Using pendulums and crystals over the city map leads the priesthood to a suggestion that the city's sewers and subterranean catacomb tunnels are being used for some kind of dark ritual.

The mission is to investigate the catacomb tunnels and sewer system and either eradicate the threat if it is found or report back if the threat is too big.

The characters will be provided with a map of the tunnels as they were some two hundred years ago 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 8" diameter and 18" to 2' tall. An adult Hiver is approximately 7' 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 off 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.

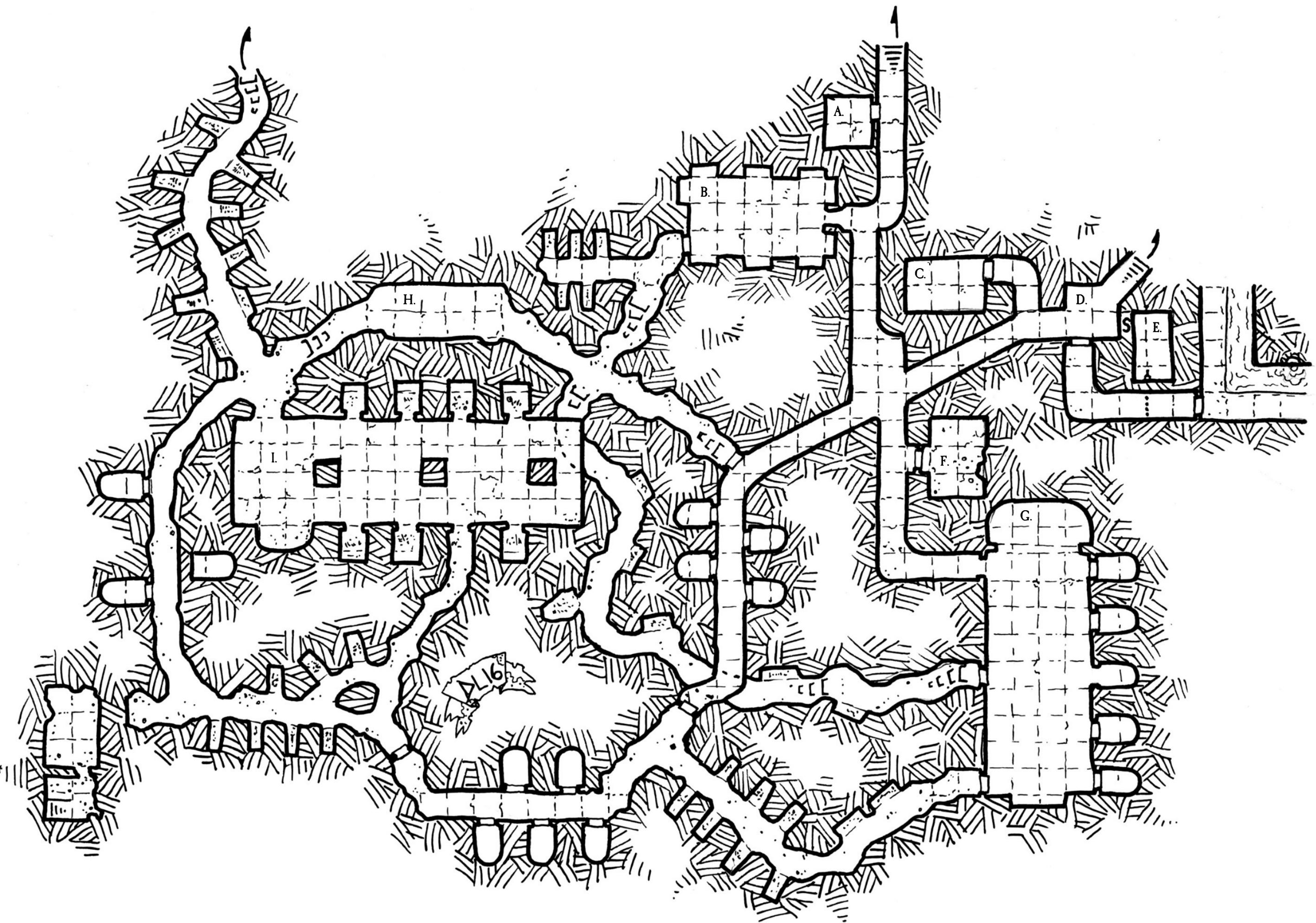
HIVER ENGINEERING.

Hivers tend not to make things, they grow and shape them. In the sewers and underground water courses under the city they have shaped chitinous valves that operate much like a Venus Flytrap. Rather than a fly triggering the trap by touching a hair, the water pressure behind the valve causes it to close until the pressure is relieved and then the valve closes again. The point of this is that the released water draws a lot

of air to flow into the space it rushed out of. In effect these valves act as pumps drawing fresh air down into the sewer and tunnel system.

Hivers are cold blooded and need warmth to operate normally but too much heat is equally dangerous. To meet this need they are included to build sophisticated systems of valves and dams to seal off major sources of heat loss or to bring in fresh air as needed.

They can also use the same structures to create one way doors made of black or dark grey chitin that once closed do not reopen.



GOING UNDERGROUND

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

Not every area 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 10 random items or events dotted around the corridors, six random encounters,

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.

The actual map is made of many circular routes. This means that enemies can come at the characters from front and rear.

EVENT I

Sudden wind rushes down the passageways making any flame based lights flicker and dance about throwing wild shadows about. Although the characters will probably ever know, this is caused by the hover's attempt to dam up some of the sewer system. When their chitin dams give way the release of built up water causes a drop in air pressure and fresh air is drawn into the tunnels.

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 an 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 magical pulse that has been detected by the council and the priesthood.

EVENT III

The Lightning Strike! Many of the additional parts of the tunnel, those not on the player map were created by a mad alchemist as a place to carry out experiments. Around the city are a variety of lightning rods attached to high buildings, with or without the owners consent. This was dozens of years ago. Now there doesn't even need to be lightning in the air, just a buildup of charged particles in the air to create an unusual effect down in the tunnels. The characters will feel a build up of air pressure and hairs will stand up on their arms and back of the neck. Characters in metal armor will see sparking electrical discharges when they get close to anything metal in the tunnels.

THE ENTRANCE

The entrance suggested by Mara is the one to the center top of the players map purely by dint of it being closer to the council buildings. These are the catacombs. The stairs in the north east are from under one of the city churches. Edge of the map to the east is the start of the sewer system.

CITY SERVICE TUNNELS

The floors of these tunnels are flagstones, the walls have been lined with cobble size stones and give a knobbly appearance. The ceilings are arched in a Norman arch shape.

The small chambers off the main tunnels hold the embalmed remains of many saints consecrated by the churches.

TUNNELS

Roll (1d10)

- 1 A foul odor fills the corridor
- 2 Stones has come away from the ceiling here and plant roots hang down into the tunnel.
- 3 The tunnel here is deeply gouged and scraped along its length.
- 4 Anti council chalk graffiti covers the tunnel walls here.
- 5 An iron ceiling grating brings down the sounds from the street above.
- 6 Corpses have been sealed into the wall with wax along the tunnel, a dozen in all. They look like homeless people.

7 Some maintenance work was in progress here. There is a wheel barrow with set solid mortar and a sack of cobble size stones against the wall.

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

9 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.

10 Discarded cocoon shells have blocked the water flow along this tunnel leading to a buildup of water about two foot deep along its length.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS (1D10)

1-2 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).

3-5 A Hiver Soldier is part of a regular patrol. It will be missed in a matter of minutes if it doesn't return.

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

7 A pair of Hiver workers hurrying along the tunnel.

8-10 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 DESCRIPTIONS

ROOM A.

This is a small washroom. There is a wooden stand with a porcelain bowl and water pitcher. There is even a (now cold) brass coal burner and a shelf with a few towels bearing the city coat of arms and motto "Fortuna Omnes"

ROOM B.

The recesses around this room hold the skeletal remains of dead monks. They have not been disturbed by the Hivers because they are not food not of any use.

ROOM C.

This room is lined on the floor, walls and ceiling with Hiver eggs. Each is about 8" around and 1½ to 2 feet tall and

colored like a grain of rice. Each egg is stuck to all of its neighbors and cannot be removed easily without breaking the eggs it is attached to. Think of them as giant grains of rice set in cement.

ROOM D.

This room has been used by the clergy to dress and prepare for interment ceremonies, a little like a vestry in a church but is now used a Hiver Soldier dormitory. If the hivers are here, and the alarm has not been raised, then they will be huddled together in a writhing mass. In such a small room there can be 2d10+2 soldiers at any one time.

ROOM E.

This room has not been discovered by the Hivers. It contains the lifting mechanism and controls for the portcullis gate. The hivers have bent enough bars of the iron portcullis to allow them to pass through it.

ROOM F.

This room is the Queens chamber. She is here and being serviced by 1d10 workers who bring food, in the form of living bodies to be drained, and take eggs to the egg chamber.

ROOM G.

This is the main Hiver nest. The walls are covered in cocoons, some filled with the semi liquid forms of their pupating hiver but most are empty forming a wall of hexagonal cells. Each wall has 60 or so cocoons three high and twenty down each long side. The doors to the grave cells are completely obscured.

ROOM H.

This room or area has been used to storing bodies. They are mainly poor and homeless from the town above. They are unconscious and sealed in wax against the walls. They can breathe but they have been so drained of blood and fluids that they are in danger of dying of shock before long. There will be regular visits by workers to drain off fluid and taking it to be regurgitated for the queen.

ROOM I.

In the center of this room is a massive chitinous mass. If it is watched for any amount of time it will be seen that it does appear to expand and contract slightly as if breathing. This is a Hiver super-mass. Hivers are not naturally magical but they have a way of gathering and shaping corruption and

forcing it to their will. The Hiver mass starts out as a queen but with sufficient corruption turns into this barely living mass. Its sole purpose is to send out a call to all hivers and announce its presence. You should think of it as a beacon. Each super-mass can only survive for a few days before the corruption makes it explode into a putrid mass.

The outer walls and floor of this room is testament to the number of previous super-masses that have gone before this one.

WHERE ARE THE HIVERS?

To the East of the service tunnels is the portcullis leading to the sewer tunnels. The sewers are circular pipes. They are not mapped but you use can use this table to auto generate them.

1	Dead end. The water drops through an iron grate to a water course below.
2	Sewer continues straight ahead
3	Side sewer joins from the left.
4	Side sewer joins from the right
5	Sewer contracts by 1' diameter
6	Sewer expands by 1' diameter

The sewers start 8' in diameter. As the characters wander around, they will discover many side tunnels. The numbers the boxouts 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.

1	Half as many Hiver Workers as there are characters.
2	An aquatic predator - think sewer 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.

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.

3	2	6	6	4	4	2	2	6	2
2	1	2	4	3	4	5	1	6	4
2	1	3	1	3	5	3	6	1	5
4	1	3	6	3	1	5	6	2	4
6	4	6	1	2	6	4	1	5	3
2	2	5	5	1	4	4	5	1	3
5	3	5	3	4	2	2	6	6	6
6	5	3	3	5	1	1	4	3	2
5	1	3	1	3	4	2	5	3	6

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 sewer 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 corrupted 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 catacombs complex attached to it, some parts go back to the early days of the city. They are typically not perfectly circular channels 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 show small, bad tempered lizards (consider them the city's 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, then just start that the bottom again and work up the columns.

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

The only way in or out of this complex for player characters is via the exits detailed in the catacomb maps.

RUNNING HIVERS III

The most sensible thing to do is for the characters to report back as soon as they realize that nearly everyone is dead and get the city guard in to deal with the infestation.

For the Game Master this adventure is all about trying to maintain the sense of threat posed by the Hiver infestation. You can have Hiver soldiers building up on every side as they surround the characters before finally mounting an attack in the dancing and flickering lights of a wind gust.

The intended vibe is that of a game of cat and mouse. You can use sound, most of the tunnels are both wet, so footsteps can splash and echoey due to their hard surfaces bouncing sound around so sounds will be distorted and will carry a long way.

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

CONCLUDING HIVERS III

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

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

NPC ROSTER

MARA LINDWURM

2nd Level Fighter, AC5 (Chain), HP 15, Attacks by weapon.

HIVERS

The hivers are a unique species of intelligent insectoids. One of their unique features is that they can create a cocoon and pupate at will and move back and forth through different forms. These forms are not life stage related but are dependent on the needs of the community.

WORKERS & DRONES

The only difference between a worker and a drone is that drones have wings.

Worker Drone

frequency:	Rare	Rare
no. enc.:	1d100	1d100
Size:	Man-size	Man-size
move:	120 ft	180 ft fly
armour class:	3	3
hit dice:	2	2
attacks:	1	1
damage:	1d6	1d6
Special att:	None	None
Special def:		
MR:	Standard	standard
lair %:	10%	10%
Intelligence:	Average	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil	
Level/xp:	2/30+1/hp	

SOLDERS

Soldiers are more formidable. They have the wings of the drones but with sharp claws capable of rending a foe.

frequency: Rare

no. enc.:	1d100
Size:	Man-size
move:	120ft/180ft fly
armour class:	3
hit dice:	2
attacks:	1
damage:	2d4
Special att:	None
Special def:	
MR:	standard
lair %:	10%
Intelligence:	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil
Level/xp:	2/30+2/hp

QUEEN

frequency:	Rare
no. enc.:	1
Size:	Large (10 ft+)
move:	120 ft, 60 ft climbing
armour class:	:2
hit dice:	3 to 8
attacks:	1
damage:	3d6
Special att:	Squirt acid
Special def:	None
MR:	Standard
lair %:	100%
Intelligence:	Average
alignment:	Lawful Evil
level/xp:	Variable

A colony queen lays eggs at a rate of one per 10 minutes and these eggs take 14hrs to mature and hatch.

If the queen is killed another Hiver will pupate as soon as it is safe to do so and become the new queen. If the queen is kept fed then they will gain 1 hit die per day until fully grown.

A queen can spit acid that does 3d6 on a successful hit and 1d4 each round afterwards until washed off.

SEWER ALLIGATOR

The sewer alligator uses the standard Crocodile monster stats, see OSRIC rules page 249 or your favourite rules version.

frequency:	Common
no. encountered:	3d8
Size:	Large
move:	60 ft, 120 ft swimming
armour class:	4
hit dice:	3
attacks:	2
damage:	2d4/1d12
Special attacks:	None
Special defences:	None
magic Resistance:	Standard
lair probability:	Nil
Intelligence:	Animal
alignment:	Neutral
level/xp:	2/50+2/hp

TENTACLE HORROR

For the purposes of this adventure the tentacle horror should be treated as a Hydra. The physical dimensions change, in effect it gets extremely long necks. Rather than the heads biting you will have the tentacles thrashing around but the damage remains the same.

frequency:	Uncommon
no. encountered:	1
Size:	Large
move:	90 ft
armour class:	5
hit dice:	5 to 16
attacks:	5 to 16
damage:	1d6, 1d8, 1d10 or 1d12 based on size
Special attacks:	None
Special defences:	None
magic Resistance:	Standard
lair probability:	20%
Intelligence:	Semi
Alignment:	Neutral
level/xp:	5/110 + 5/hp up to 9/5,000 + 20/hp

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