



The Essence of Evil

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... And in the last days, the sleep of a thousand years shall end when the herald appears, blotting out the sun in all its awesome glory. Its shuddering bulk shall sound the trumpets of destiny, those clarion calls to bring forth He Who Waits, the Dark God, the Wrongly Held. The 333 jewels that contain the dread master shall shatter, and the world shall tremble, wailing and clawing, begging their petty gods for escape from the wondrous return of the Unraveler, whose appearance shall set to right all wrongs, restore all balance, and reduce the abomination of creation to its primal, primitive state. Rejoice, for the end is at hand...


“The Essence of Evil” is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure designed for four to six 20th-level characters. Player characters who complete this climactic event should advance to 21st level or higher. “The Essence of Evil” is designed to be the conclusion of a long campaign—a capstone to an excellent series of adventures. The plot is broadly sketched to allow Dungeon Masters to link it to nearly any campaign in any campaign setting. Alternatively, this adventure can make for a brutal stand-alone scenario, allowing players and DMs a deadly scenario to explore high-level games.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

“The Essence of Evil” is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. You need the *Player’s Handbook* and *Dungeon Master’s Guide* to play. This adventure references a broad range of materials including *Book of Vile Darkness* (BV), *Complete Arcane* (CAr), *Complete Divine* (CD), *Complete Warrior* (CW), *Epic Level Handbook* (ELH), *Fiend Folio* (FF), *Fiendish Codex I* (FC1), *Lords of Madness* (LM), *Magic Item Compendium* (MIC), *Monster Manual* (MM), *Monster Manual III* (MM3), *Monster Manual IV* (MM4), *Monster Manual V* (MM5), *Players Handbook II* (PH2), *Races of Stone* (RS), *Spell Compendium* (SpC), and *Tome of Battle* (ToB), though none of these materials are necessary for play. All pertinent material including statistics and feat summaries are included in the tactical encounters. If you don’t have *Spell Compendium*, simply select other spells from a supplement you do have.

PREPARATION

“The Essence of Evil” is an unusual adventure in that it leaves much of what has come before to the DM to design. Suggestions and ideas are included here, but how this adventure site fits into your campaign is entirely at your discretion. You could, for instance, start at the dungeon’s “doorstep,” sending the PCs into a har-



rowing descent into madness and appalling evil, or you could seed the adventure background into an ongoing campaign to foreshadow the events described in these pages. Whatever you decide, this adventure will be a challenge, and its outcome could have lasting effects on your campaign setting, as is fitting for any scenario featuring an elder evil as the principle villain.

This adventure is designed for experienced DMs. It is a difficulty foray, featuring numerous monsters and adversaries with a broad range of abilities, in deadly environments, and with the fate of your campaign setting at stake. You could downplay any of these elements, altering the nature of the elder evil and recast the adventure to have less impact on your world. You can swap out monsters for those you feel have a stronger connection to your personal campaign setting, or even discard the adventure entirely and pull the creatures out to populate a dungeon of your own design. However you use this adventure, “The Essence of Evil” is bound to take your players to the brink and test their skills and abilities in ways they’ve never been tested before.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Few names strike as much fear as the dreaded Tharizdun. The Dark God has many names, looming large in the minds of every sentient race to walk the Material Plane. He is known as the Patient One, He of Eternal Darkness, while others call him the Elder Elemental Eye, the Ebon God, or by any of countless other appellations. All of these are masks—facades to conceal utter malevolence and evil. A god so powerful and so destructive, his mere existence compelled the gods of good and evil to set aside their differences and lock him away for all time. This is Tharizdun, the lord of entropy, the force of decay and destruction in the multiverse. He is the god of madness, the father of endings, and to some, he is the sire of elder evils.

In spite of the gods’ efforts to contain this malign entity, Tharizdun’s touch has not been far from mortal minds. In their dreams, their fantasies, their feverish thoughts, he whispers unspeakable secrets, driving mad those who would listen, seducing them with promises of power, wealth, the fulfillment of their lust, vengeance, and anything else he can to fill their souls with an unquenchable thirst to serve his awful will. He puts before his servants one dreadful task. He demands freedom—release from the hateful bonds that contain him in the far-flung prison deep inside the gloomiest depths of the Ethereal Plane. It is a task many have promised to fulfill but none have achieved, for the

enemies of the Dark God are many and varied, drawn to oppose the certain destruction his release threatens. So it is that history is littered with corpses of Tharizdun’s failed servants, of bold cultists cast down, and of entire civilizations brought to ruin for their allegiance to this foul master. To many, it seems Tharizdun is a tired threat, an old menace easily thwarted and one not worth committing the resources and heroes to defeat, for too often his minions find defeat. While some still remain committed to being vigilant against Tharizdun’s endless legions, the cancer spreads and complacency blooms in the hearts of those that matter. It is but a matter of time before the world becomes too soft—too weak—to oppose him and his children, and that time is now.

Deep beneath a forlorn volcano, long dormant but active with the servants of the Elder Elemental Eye, lays a dreadful thing—a fragment of He of Eternal Darkness brought low ages ago by powerful magic. For centuries, the abomination has waited, growing fat on the prayers of those mortal above that gave their lives and those of their sacrifices to honor their insane master. Never content with such petty supplications, the entity divided its minions into factions and turned them against one another, compelling them to fight and murder, to harvest the souls of their brethren in evil. Each new death fed the elder evil, awakening a dire intelligence and a grim awareness until it took a name and found its purpose. It became Shothragot, the Herald of Tharizdun and the key to unlock the dread prison.

As it stirred and trembled, it called upon awful servants to slaughter those remaining enemies, to winnow the ranks of those divine servants who would stand against it as it blossomed into the fullness of its horrid form. It assumed control over the scattered cultists, compelling them to seek out the keys that would unlock the dark god’s prison, to find the 333 *Gems of Tharizdun* and return them to it so the Herald might consume them and grow powerful on their energies. For eight long years, the Herald feasted, growing fat on the burgeoning wickedness, greedily swallowing the stones as quickly as they arrived. The last gemstone devoured, Shothragot is ready to seek out its dread master. It tears free from its hidden redoubt and drifts into the heavens to make its final journey.

What the PCs Know

As an elder evil, Shothragot’s appearance in the world triggers the appearance of a sign of the apocalypse, a potent sigil that warns mortals of the impending doom.

SEALS OF BINDING

The Seals of Binding interfere with most conjuration spells and many divination spells. By closing off the avenues that enable mortals to interact with the planes, clerics find their connections with the divine severed, summoned creatures remain trapped, and the most expedient means of travel cease to function.

To identify the features of the sign, a character may make a Knowledge (religion) check. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, it identifies the sign's strength. Success by 10 or more reveals the sign's full effects at all levels of strength.

Faint (DC 45): All conjuration (calling, summoning, and teleportation) and divination spells and spell-like abilities are impeded. A spellcaster must succeed on a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the level of the spell) or the spell fails and the spell or spell slot is lost. In addition, spells that return creatures to their native plane, such as *banishment* or *dismissal*, automatically fail.

Moderate (DC 35): As *faint*, but also summoned creatures no longer return to their native plane. The summoned creature remains under the caster's control for the duration of the spell, but is free to act normally once the duration expires.

Divine spellcasters cast their spells at -1 caster level and turn or rebuke attempts take a -5 penalty on the check and damage rolls.

Strong (DC 25): As *moderate*, but when a conjuration (teleportation) spell or spell-like ability is cast, there's a 20% chance for a mishap. On a mishap, the caster and anyone else affected by the spell takes 5d6 points of damage.

Divine spellcasters cast their spells at -2 caster levels. As well, turning and rebuking attempts take a -10 penalty on the check and damage rolls.

Overwhelming (DC 15): All conjuration (calling, summoning, and teleportation) spells cease to function. Divination spells that contact extraplanar beings (*commune* and *contact other plane* for example) are likewise foiled. Divine spellcasters cast all spells at -4 caster levels and when praying for new spells, they have a 20% chance per spell of losing it. Last, turning and rebuking attempts take a -20 penalty on the check and damage rolls.

In the case of this abomination, the sign is of divine origin, a seal to contain the wickedness of this appalling entity and prevent its reunion with Tharizdun.

Undoubtedly, the player characters as well as countless others, have felt the sign intensify, catching sight of its manifestation, first in subtle ways, but growing more powerful as Shothragot grows in power. The Herald's particular sign manifests as the Seals of Binding, a strange glyph that spreads across the heavens to interfere with conjuration magic. For details on the sign's full

effects, see the Seals of Binding sidebar. At the start of *The Essence of Evil*, Shothragot's sign is at Overwhelming strength. If you intend to run this adventure as the conclusion of your campaign, consider revealing the sign earlier to signal the approaching doom.

Since noticing something is wrong is unavoidable, the player characters should have plenty of opportunity to research the sign's implications and associations and perhaps learn something more of Tharizdun in the process. Regardless of the PCs' preparations, the full weight of the threat reveals itself when Shothragot tears free from the Crater Ridge Mines (*Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*) and drifts into the sky toward the glyph burning in the heavens. Whatever the thing is, it aims to reach the fiery sign, and who can say what will happen when it reaches it?

What the PCs Don't Know

Bloated on the Gems of Tharizdun, the elder evil is ready to make its journey. However, it is contained by the fiery glyph in the heavens. As long as it remains, it cannot leave the Material Plane. Thus, the elder evil commands its servant Lareth the Beautiful to destroy the Gems it has swallowed, but the cleric is reluctant for it knows guardians protect the stones and he fears he lacks the power to destroy them. Thus the elder evil hovers until its servant finds the courage to do as he is bid.

Another complication is that as the elder evil grew, it attracted the noisome attention of all manner of fiends. Demons, elementals, and corrupted abominations have burrowed into its form, some to worship it, others to accompany it as it makes its passage into the Ethereal Plane. If the elder evil cares, it shows no sign and seems content to let the parasites exist for now.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The sign is at full strength and the land shudders under the weight of the elder evil and its progress. Since Shothragot's agents murdered or imprisoned most other would-be champions and heroes, it falls to the player characters to attend to this apocalyptic threat. Fighting the elder evil itself is impossible since it is too big and too resilient to be destroyed from outside. Instead, the heroes must journey inside the elder evil, seek out its essence, and destroy it.

A number of complications combine to make this task extraordinarily difficult. First, there's the matter of reaching the elder evil. Certainly, characters of this level should have means to reach the mass by means of an *overland flight* spell, but note that so long as the glyph

continues to burn in the heavens, conjuration (teleportation) spells automatically fail. Once the characters reach the elder evil, they have to find a way inside.

Within, the player characters learn there is no way to reach the essence of Shothragot due to a sealed portal that, thanks to the glyph, no longer functions and blocks the passage. Diminishing the glyph is possible if the PCs destroy all of the *Gems of Tharizdun* (see area 4). This causes the glyph to recede and gives the PCs the chance to jump through the portal at area 6 to face the essence in area 22. Unfortunately, weakening the glyph also enables the elder evil to slip free from the Material Plane. Once there, the PCs must overcome the essence before it reaches Tharizdun's prison plane.

A better solution is to find the *torch of revealing* and the *incense of dreaming* (found in area 18). If the adventurers bring the lit torch to the portal, the light it radiates opens the portal and allows the PCs to slip through without releasing the elder evil.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can become involved in this adventure in a number of ways.

Sudden Appearance: The elder evil tears free from the earth in an enormous explosion that causes earthquakes and tidal waves, and that also vomits up plumes of dust and debris into the atmosphere. Following the event, the elder evil appears in the sky, slowing climbing toward the fiery glyph that now spreads across the heavens as if it were some incredible world-spanning eldritch shield. As a result of the heavenly phenomena, magic is damaged, spells fail, and other, subtler effects take hold, plunging the world into turmoil. It falls to the PCs to fight this potent menace and put to right the world by eliminating it.

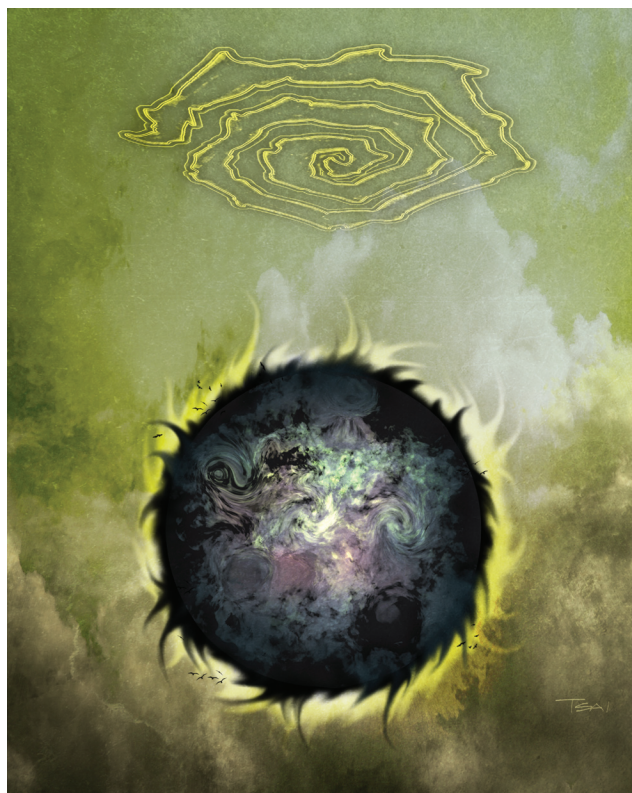
Impending Doom: For ages, prophets and mystics have foretold a coming calamity—warned all who would listen that the end was nigh. No one believed them until the skies ignited with flames and magic unraveled. As the sign intensified, the earth swelled and gradually there emerged a massive ball of darkness. The various churches and temples declared war on the thing, knowing the end of all things was at hand. The PCs, along with others, are recruited to fight this menace. Tragically, all attempts to defeat the monstrosity have failed, leaving it to one final band of heroes to set things aright.

Planar Catastrophe: Shothragot emerges from the land on an alternate Material Plane only to be cast out by powerful magic, shunted into the Plane of Shadow.

Drifting through the endless darkness and leaving a swathe of destruction in its wake, it finally emerges into the PCs' Material Plane. When it does, it tears a hole in reality, bringing with it a tide of horror. Legions of twisted shadow creatures spread like black ink across the land. While the people rally to fight back the hordes, the elder evil rages in the heavens sowing destruction wherever it goes. It's believed that if someone can destroy the abomination, the fiery glyph will vanish and allow the gods to lend their aid to fighting the shadowy hordes.

INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS

Drifting in the heavens is a great ball of roiling darkness, an uncertain orb that shudders and writhes, belching forth its corruption to wash over the land. Horrid creatures fly about the mass, shrieking and gibbering in celebration of the Herald's passage. As it ascends, ever so slowly, the light of the fiery glyph shines in the heavens, intricately carved as if by the hands of the gods themselves.



USING THIS ADVENTURE

Although the elder evil described in this adventure has overt connections to Tharizdun, a major and enduring threat in the GREYHAWK campaign setting, you can easily adapt this scenario for use with a variety of other game settings.

Forgotten Realms: In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, Shothragot is the Herald of Ghaunadaur. Created to wipe out mortal worshipers of his enemy gods, the Elder Eye uses the Herald to distract the gods while he mounts an offensive against his rivals. Using the power he steals from his defeated enemies, he plans to cast down Ao and seize the multiverse and the secrets of creation for himself. The PCs must stop the Herald before Ghaunadaur can make his move.

Eberron: Forged by a powerful and nearly forgotten daelkyr warlord, Shothragot lays in wait for the moment its master calls. When foul agents of evil descend into the Khyber, they uncover Shothragot's resting place and awaken the abomination. Tearing loose from the ground, the elder evil intends to breach the bounds of reality and bring forth the Realm of Madness fully into the mortal realm.

Dragonlance: Having been stirred to consciousness during the War of Souls, the Herald erupts from the soil to escape the Material Plane and seek out its maker, a fragment of Chaos locked inside the mysterious Void.

Demiplane of Dread: Shothragot has torn free from a Material Plane, destroying it and everyone in it. As it drifts through the Ethereal Plane, the mists of the Demiplane of Dread ensnare it and draw it and all of its wickedness

within the boundaries of the horrific plane. Shothragot cackles with glee as the Domain Lords vie and wage war against one another in the effort to claim the elder evil for themselves.

Mystara: Spawned by the united will of the Outer Beings, Shothragot instead emerges from the Nightmare Dimension intent on raining death and destruction upon the world. As it passes over the lands, it births countless abominations, seeding the world with creations born from the diseased minds of inexplicable forces of chaos and entropy.

Dark Sun: Believed to be a sentient fragment of the force responsible for the Dead Lands, the horror is born in a torrent of unleashed destruction. Rather than flying through the heavens, Shothragot spreads across the land, pulling itself along with its inky tentacles. Like spilled ink, what little life that remains on Athas is now in jeopardy unless bold heroes can stop the elder evil before it's too late.

Birthright: The Cold Rider awakens Shothragot in the hopes of using it to restore its former power and might, to regain the mantle of Azrai, the dark god. The elder evil drifts into the heavens to pierce the Evanescence and merge the Material Plane with the Shadow World, while the Cold Rider provokes its bestial servants to wage war across the lands in preparation for the dreadful event that could plunge this war-torn world into ruin.

Key Features

The elder evil's interior is a shuddering network of living tunnels, dripping passages filled with noxious fumes and beads of acid sweat oozing from the porous walls. The air is laden with the stench of rot and decay, and coarse hair reaches out to snatch those that pass by. Each chamber is a new vista of horror, twisted and corrupt, born from Tharizdun's insane mind.

Ceilings: Passages and chambers are usually as tall as they are wide.

Floors: Unless otherwise mentioned, all spaces in this environment count as difficult terrain thanks to the animated hairs that reach up and coil about the legs of people exploring the tunnels.

Walls: The walls of the complex are made from particularly tough flesh. Each 10-foot section has 120 hit points, damage reduction 20/good and silver, and fast healing 5. Any *weapon* attack against the wall that deals 50 or more points of damage causes the section to rupture and create a 30-foot cone of acid. All creatures in the area take 10d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 25 half). The rupture clots and seals after 1 round.

Lighting: The entire place is dark—so dark it even mutes light sources brought inside. Treat all nonmagi-

cal light sources as shedding shadowy light out to their normal bright ranges and no light beyond. Magical light sources have their ranges of illumination halved. Characters with darkvision can see normally.

Sounds: The elder evil's form is alive with noise; there's always some groaning sound, some distant shriek, or a deep and rumbling chuckle, as if the PCs amused the place. All Listen checks take a -5 penalty.

Defenses

The elder evil is infested with creatures—dreadful beings trapped in the Material Plane because of its presence or horrors hoping to curry favor with the Dark God. The PCs are not in danger of encountering wandering monsters unless they cast a damaging spell whose area comes in contact with a wall. Should this occur, the wall bulges as a black tumescent tumor forms. After 1d3 rounds, the tumor splits open in a torrent of caustic fluids dealing 5d6 points of acid damage to all creatures within 20 feet (DC 20 Reflex save for half). Following the vile fluid is a black cyst, an awful servitor of Shothragot. The newly created abomination attacks the closest creature each round until it senses no creatures within range of its blindsight. Once created, a black cyst remains until destroyed.

BLACK CYST

CR 18

hp 346 (33 HD); regeneration 10; DR 15/lawful and silver

Always CE Large outsider (chaos, evil, extraplanar)

Init +7; Senses blindsight 120 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +39, Spot +39

Aura warping (60 ft., DC 33)

Languages A black cyst cannot speak but understands telepathic instructions from the essence of Tharizdun

AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 32; Dodge

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +5 insight, +18 natural)

Immune critical hits, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, petrification

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 26

Fort +29, Ref +26, Will +26

Weakness vulnerability to sonic

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 100 ft. (perfect); Flyby Attack

Melee 8 tentacles +40 (1d6+8/19-20)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +33; Grp +45

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*confusion*), aligned strike (chaos, evil), entropic touch, magic strike

Special Actions spawn elemental

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th):

At will—*confusion* (DC 19), *ethereal jaunt*

1/day—*insanity* (DC 22), *power word stun*, *waves of exhaustion*

Abilities Str 26, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 17, Cha 21

SQ blessing of Tharizdun

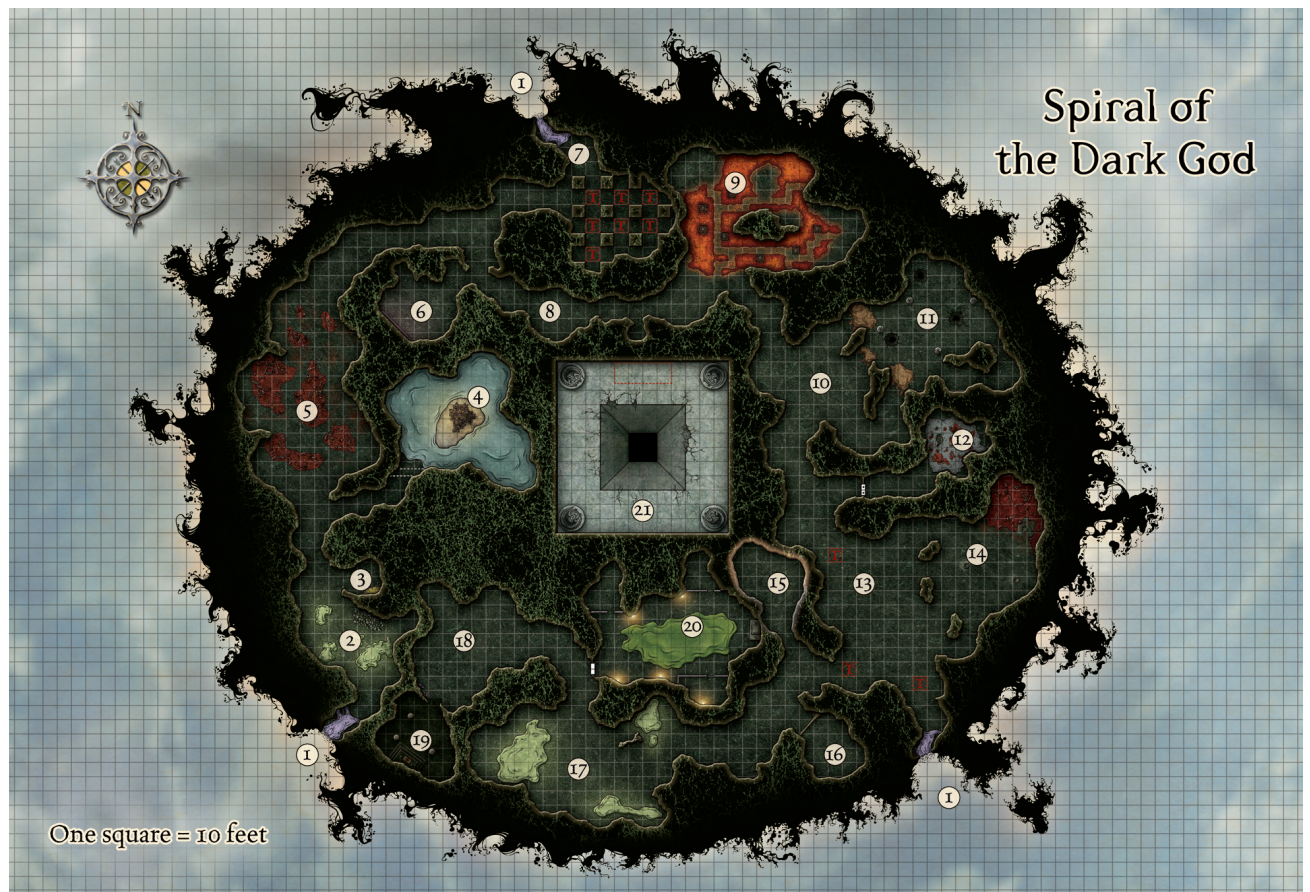
Feats Ability Focus (warping aura), Cleave, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*confusion*)

Skills Hide +35, Listen +39, Move Silently +39, Spot +39

Warping Aura (Su) Each round, at the start of the black cyst's turn, all living creatures within 60 feet must succeed on a DC 33 Will save or take -5 insight penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Regeneration (Ex) A black cyst takes lethal damage from lawful and silver weapons as well as from effects with the sonic descriptor.

Entropic Touch (Su) As the *harm* spell, Will DC 31 half,



caster level 15th. Once the black cyst uses this ability, it cannot use again in the same 24-hour period unless it takes 50 or more points of damage.

Spawn Elemental (Su) Whenever a black cyst is reduced to 200 hit points or less, it spews forth an elder elemental into an adjacent square. Roll 1d4 to determine the elemental's type: 1—air; 2—earth; 3—fire; 4—water. The spawned elemental is a normal elemental for its kind except its alignment is chaotic evil. The elemental is under the control of the black cyst that spawned it. Should the black cyst's hit point total rise above 200, the elder elemental vanishes.

Blessing of Tharizdun (Ex) A black cyst may add its Charisma bonus as an insight bonus to AC and as a resistance bonus on all saving throws. These bonuses are included above.

ENCOUNTER AREAS

The following locations correspond to those indicated on the dungeon map.

1. Suppurating Valves

The elder evil's body floats above the surface of the world. Its altitude depends on how long it takes the PCs to reach it. For each day after its first appearance, it ascends 500 feet.

When the player characters come within 100 feet of the elder evil, read:



The massive, spinning ball of glistening darkness hangs in the air, slowly and steadily rising into the firmament. Its surface writhes as if alive, and its foul fluid wars with waves of mud. Toxic fumes vent into the air. Plumes of black fire scorch the sky.

When the player characters come within 50 feet of an entrance, read:

A shuddering valve, fleshy in appearance, opens onto a dim passageway into the form's interior. Spilling forth from the wound is a torrent of bright purple fluid, which rains down on the land far below.

When the characters come within 50 feet of the elder evil, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Suppurating Valves (page 17).

2. Cyst of Madness

Obox-Ob, the Prince of Vermin, brought with him a number of servants to safeguard his presence while in the company of the elder evil. Once inside the abomination, the fickle lord abandoned its scions and left them in this chamber to find their own fates.

When the PCs come to the edge of the map, read:

Pools of phosphorescent fluid cast the chamber in ghastly lime-colored light. Several misshapen lumps of flesh quiver in the gloom.

When the PCs enter the room, they trigger the tactical encounter. The draudnus's true seeing ability allows them to spot invisible or otherwise hidden characters.

Tactical Encounter: Cyst of Madness, page (page 19).

3. Crying Room

The Crying Room takes its name from the violet condensation collecting on the walls of this odd chamber.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

The walls bleed a running violet fluid that dribbles down to collect into small puddles on the floor. Scattered around the place are loose coins and an assortment of oddities.

Believed by the denizens to be a place sacred to Tharizdun, those intelligent creatures inhabiting the elder evil occasionally make offerings here.

Treasure: Scattered across the floor are 6,066 gp, a small inverted basalt pyramid studded with tiny

amethysts (worth 3,000 gp), a pink rhomboid ioun stone, and a ring of avoidance^{MIC}. If you don't have the *Magic Item Compendium*, replace the ring of avoidance with a ring of force shield and a potion of cure serious wounds.

4. Pool of Molten Ice

This room houses a trio of the Dark God's servants. Charged with guarding the digested Gems of Tharizdun, these guardians attack anyone they deem to be an intruder.

As part of the safeguards that protect the gemstones, a prismatic wall trap stretches across the entrance of the room, activating 2 rounds after the first person crosses its threshold.

Prismatic Wall Trap: CR 10; magic device; proximity trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*prismatic wall*, CL 15th, see PH 264); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

Once the PCs enter the chamber, read:

Murky water floods this large room and rising from the center is an island of dark stone studded with black jewels that reflect the light of two large balls of roiling fire hovering in the air on either side of the entrance.

Once the trap activates, when a PC enters the water, or when a character touches the islands, the PCs trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Pool of Molten Ice (page 21).

5. Carnage

When the elder evil consumed the last Gem of Tharizdun, cultists clambered to find a place within the abomination, to be carried forth and witness firsthand the power of the Dark God. Gathering in this chamber to chant their prayers and supplications, they waited for the appointed time. However, a molydeus in the service of Orcus had other plans.

After the demon prince of undeath learned of Obox-Ob's interests in Shothragot, Orcus dispatched an enforcer to weaken the cult of the Elder Elemental Eye in the hopes of dashing the obyrith lord's plans. The demon arrived just as the elder evil made its destructive journey to the surface and, like others, it hitched a ride inside of its bulk. It followed the cultists into this room, where it immediately chopped them into bloody chunks of meat.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

The cause of this room's stench is soon made clear by the hundreds of dismembered corpses cooling in pools of their own blood

throughout this massive chamber. Humans, kuo-toas, goblinoids, and more all lie scattered about in various forms of mutilation, congealing into a macabre carpet of flesh and gore.

If the PCs have not yet encountered the molydeus, they face it here.

Tactical Encounter: Carnage (page 24).

6. Puce Portal

This room holds the portal that grants passage to the essence of Shothragot. Pounding on the gate is a frustrated inevitability. A DC 5 Listen check (modified by distance) reveals the sounds of its hammering.

If the PCs have not yet destroyed the Gems of Tharizdun in area 4, read:



A pale yellow disk surrounded by a scorched ring of blackened flesh hangs against the far wall. Hammering against the disk is a large abstract being, its body made up of intricate clockwork sheathed in greenish-blue metal plating. Its head, a flattened disk, pivots to face your direction and a single blazing red eye fixes upon you.

The creature is a varakhut, an inevitable created to defend the gods and their works. It and several others like it appeared in the Material Plane shortly after the elder evil awakened. All of the other inevitables that made the journey met various nasty fates until only this construct remained of the original expedition.

The varakhut is hostile to any creature it encounters inside the elder evil. It does, however, give the PCs long enough to explain their presence. It attacks unless the characters improve its attitude to friendly (DC 35).

Tactical Encounter: Puce Portal (page 26).

Should the adventurers succeed on improving its attitude, it turns back to pounding on the portal, ignoring the PCs. Only if the characters improve its attitude to helpful (DC 50) will it talk with them. The inevitable knows everything described in the adventure background and relates this information if asked. It offers to assist the PCs in their efforts to destroy the abomination and accompanies the adventurers so long as they make clear progress toward their goal. If the PCs falter, the varakhut abandons them.

If the PCs have destroyed the *Gems of Tharizdun* in area 4, read:

Lambent flames burn the walls all around a large disk of pulsing puce light. Vague shapes can be seen within. Monstrous things, dark and feminine, flit back and forth. The dim room beyond seems otherwise empty.

Whenever the portal opens, the varakhut slips through the gate to attack the essence of Shothragot. As one might expect, the blackstone gigants and the essence make short work of the inevitable, destroying it after 1d4+2 rounds.

If the PCs bring a lit torch of revealing into this chamber, read:

When the eerie light of the torch falls upon the disk, the cloudiness vanishes and you can see clearly into a massive chamber. Four enormous stone statues stand guard over a great pit, where something black and profoundly evil throbs and groans.

With the light of the torch, the PCs can cross over and confront the essence of Shothragot in its lair.

7. Pits and Pillars

Several traps ward this chamber. When the PCs enter this room, read:

Ten-foot wide pillars sculpted to resemble tortured human men and women, their flesh flayed from their bodies, fill this room.

In each space indicated on the map, there are two traps, one on the floor and another on the ceiling. Any pressure placed on a floor in these spaces causes them to swirl open, revealing a gap that travels through the elder evil and out into the open air below. Damage from the fall depends on the elder evil's altitude (typically 20d6 points of falling damage).

Open-Air Pit Trap: CR 11; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Reflex DC 25 avoids; 20d6, fall; multiple targets (all targets within a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

Characters flying or levitating in these spaces trigger the second trap, which causes the ceiling to open up and triggers a *control winds* spell at hurricane force to blow the creature up and out of the elder evil. Characters blown out through the top of the elder evil fall as above unless they are under the effects of a *fly* or similar spell. Those that land on the exterior are subject to the elder evil's epidermis (see Features of the Area on page 18).

Control Winds Trap: CR 7; magical; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*control winds*, hurricane force, Fortitude DC 15 negates; multiple targets (all targets within a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

8. Corridor of Sighs

Numerous orifices whisper in the dark of this corridor, imparting fell secrets on those who traverse its length.

When the characters enter this corridor, read:

A susurrus sounds as you press on through this corridor carrying with it faint whispering noises and mournful cries.

Characters traveling through this area are entitled to a DC 25 Listen check. Those that succeed hear "the gems" repeated and mixed with sobs and cries. The noise emanates from the petitioners of Tharizdun, who, because their god is chained in the Ethereal Plane, have nowhere to go and are thus condemned to join the elder evil, trapped between worlds.

9. The Dark God's Prison

Service to the Ebon God is difficult at best. Enemies oppose the god from all sides, even within the cult's own ranks. To make matters worse, mortal servants are often driven insane by the whispers of their unspeakable master, by the sights they see in their brief service, and by the knowledge of the doom they bring unto the world by chasing after the objectives of their foul master. Most cultists that lack the will to serve are destroyed because the Dark God doesn't tolerate weakness in his minions. Those who disappoint their master find terrible fates as is revealed by this room.

This chamber contains the raving servants of Tharizdun. Deemed flawed, the cult sealed them inside the cages and left them in the care of the scions of madness to guard.

When the PCs reach the edge of the chamber, read:

The passage widens into a large chamber filled with smoke and fire. Narrow pathways wind through the conflagration, passing near black iron cages hanging from thick chains set into the ceiling.

When the PCs enter the room, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: The Dark God's Prison (page 28).

10. Antechamber

This odd room serves as the antechamber for a cluster of beholders in area 11. Seventy-feet up on the far wall are three large holes cut through the flesh of the elder evil by the beholders' disintegration rays. Unless the PCs go to investigate or make a lot of noise, the beholders in the adjacent room are content to serve the whims of their corrupted hive mother.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

This bleak chamber is cold and patches of ice cling to the walls and floor. The ceiling rises far above, and against the far wall, you see three brown waterfalls, frozen in motion by the chill of the room.

The waterfalls are actually the ichors of the elder evil, created by the tears in its flesh. The room is indeed below freezing, but the temperature is not a threat if the PCs don't linger overlong. Every 10 minutes the characters remain in this room, they must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing winter clothing need only check once per hour. A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Survival check gains a +2

bonus (+4 if stationary) on the Fortitude save and may extend this bonus to one other character per point by which he beat the DC.

11. Fetid Cluster

A cluster of corrupted beholders and their equally disturbing hive mother lair in this chamber. These deviant aberrations believe the elder evil is the avatar of the Great Mother and have come to pay fealty by infesting its foul form.

Three portals about 70 feet above area 10 cut through the dark hide of the elder evil and allow access to this chamber. The ice that coats the wall makes climbing perilous (Climb DC 30), though characters likely have other means of accessing this chamber.

When the PCs enter one of the portals, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Fetid Cluster (page 31).

Treasure: At the bottom of the unoccupied pit is the beholders' sacrifices to the Great Mother. They include 2,751 pp, 4,089 gp, two star rubies (worth 1,000 gp each), three bright green emerald (worth 5,000 gp), a platinum idol of the great mother (worth 10,000 gp), *Manual of Gainful Exercise* +1, *white robe of the archmagi*, and a +4 *longsword of speed*.

12. Chamber of Delights

The door to this chamber is locked (Open Lock DC 35) and is protected by a *symbol of weakness*.

Symbol of Weakness Trap: CR 7; magical; proximity trigger (pass through the door); no reset; spell effect (*symbol of weakness*, 13th-level cleric, 3d6 Strength, Will DC 20 negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

When the PCs examine the door, read:

A huge iron door stands before you. It is carved with hundreds of tiny screaming faces, their eyes weeping real tears that leave rusty streaks across the door's face.

Once the PCs open the door, read:

A 10-foot-wide corridor with rough black walls stretches ahead some 40 feet before expanding into a larger chamber. Bones litter the corridor and the place reeks of decay.

At the end of the corridor, read:

An appalling mess of broken bodies and splattered gore covers this horrific chamber of death. A filthy purple carpet covers the floor, torn and stained with blood. Rising in the center is



an altar of flesh, an unholy fusion of glistening organs that twitch with unlife.

This chamber was the site of a particularly gruesome ritual that saw the destruction of many innocents offered up by Lareth the Beautiful (see area 21) to Tharizdun. Resulting from this profoundly evil act, a potent deathshrieker was born.

If the PCs walk down the corridor and enter the room, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Chamber of Delights (page 34).

13. The Gauntlet

The klurichir demons in area 14 watch over this room from their lair. To deal with intruders, each has inscribed a *symbol of pain* where indicated on the map.

Symbol of Pain Trap: CR 5; magical; proximity trigger (pass over the glyph); no reset; spell effect (*symbol of pain*, 20th-level sorcerer, as the spell, Will DC 21 negates); Search DC 30; Disable Device 30.

If the PCs trigger the trap, the demons cast *greater invisibility* followed with *magic missile* and *destruction* to lure the adventurers into area 14. If the PCs don't take the bait, the demons come after them, using tactics as described in Tactical Encounter 14.

14. Demonic Sentinels

This large chamber is the barracks for a trio of deadly sentinels. Charged by Lareth the Beautiful to watch over the entrance nearby, these demons set up a nasty trap guarding the exits from area 13. The demons prefer to mount their attack from this room rather than engage the PCs in the area of the *symbols of pain*, lest they themselves trigger the wards. Thus, they cast spells into the adjacent room in the hopes of luring the PCs to their position and thus trigger the other *symbols of pain* safeguarding the entrances to this chamber.

When the PCs engage the demons, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Demonic Sentinels (page 36).

15. Flesh Chamber

This disturbing chamber makes manifest the true nature of this dungeon.

When the characters enter this chamber, read:

The dark walls lighten as you make your way into the gloomy corridor. Eventually, rugged black walls give way to gray and then finally a pink surface when you come to the corridor's end. Pale green moisture collects on the walls and the entire place reeks of ammonia.



The walls here are indeed fleshy, and using a slashing or piercing weapon causes them to bleed fiercely. Worse, such injury causes the entire elder evil to shake and shudder, knocking all creatures prone unless they succeed on a DC 15 Balance check. If the PCs deal 20 or more points of damage to the walls here, the entire corridor constricts, dealing 10d6 points of bludgeoning damage. Each round thereafter, the PCs take 4d6+12 points of bludgeoning damage, 2d6 points of acid damage, and 6 points of vile damage as the walls grind and struggle to digest the PCs. Characters can cut their way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 20 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 26). Once the character exits, muscular action closes the hole; another PC must cut his or her own way out. After 1d6 rounds, the corridor relaxes and frees any remaining PCs that are still trapped.

16. The Blister

More cyst than chamber, a disgusting skin of congealed fluid holds back a corrosive flood.

If the characters examine the barrier, read:

A pliable membrane the color of sickness stretches taut across this passage.

It takes only 10 points of damage from a slashing or piercing weapon to break the membrane. Any character that does so causes the acidic fluid to spray forth. All creatures within 30 feet of the spray takes 10d6 points of acid damage (DC 25 Reflex save halves). Once the blister is broken, it reveals an empty chamber beyond.

17. Keepers of the Eye

Two deathdrinker demons protect this room. Contemptible creatures, Lareth the Beautiful enlisted them as guardians, posting them here to watch for intruders.

When the PCs enter this room, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Keepers of the Eye (page 38).

18. The Emissary

Rumors of the elder evil's existence and awakening have spread throughout the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, and various demon princes have each taken an interest in what Shothragot intends. Some are opposed to the machinations of the Chained God (such as Orcus), while others are keenly interested in seeing Tharizdun released. The main demon prince to seek an alliance is Obox-Ob, whose own agenda is close to that of the Dark God. Obox-Ob dispatched his dread aspect to treat with the Dark God. Until the elder evil reaches Tharizdun's prison, the aspect is content to wait here.

When the PCs approach this room, read:

A foul stench emanates from this chamber, and from inside the gloom of this place, you hear the chittering of countless insects, each clicking and clacking as they scuttle in the dark.

The aspect of Obox-Ob is not interested in a fight since it has but one chance to encounter Tharizdun and defeat here would ruin its plans. Having been slain once before, forced to remake itself from a surviving aspect, this aspect knows that an unnecessary risk could prove to be an insurmountable setback, especially if the PCs have not yet destroyed the *Gems of Tharizdun* in area 4. Rather than wiping out the party at once, it keeps

itself concealed in the corner and uses telepathy to communicate with the PCs using the Abyssal tongue. It questions them to find out where they have been, to confirm what it believes has been their mission, and to learn what progress they have made thus far. The aspect knows the sign of apocalypse contains the elder evil and it can complete its mission only if the sign is weakened. Thus, it is keenly interested in whether the PCs have weakened the sign so far.

If the characters have not yet weakened the sign, Obox-Ob suggests destroying the *Gems of Tharizdun*, claiming such an act would surely weaken the elder evil. Under no circumstances does Obox-Ob mention the Puce Portal (area 6) and its ability to transport the PCs to the essence of Shothragot.

Obox-Ob has little to gain from concealing his identity and should the characters ask, he reveals himself and that he, like the PCs, is an enemy of the tanar'ri. He explains his own quest to destroy the usurper race and claims he's been imprisoned here along with everyone else. A character that succeeds on a DC 30 Knowledge

(religion) check knows Obox-Ob is an ancient demon of a race that precedes the tanar'ri. A check that succeeds by 5 or more also reveals that Obox-Ob seeks the annihilation of all things much like Tharizdun.

The aspect of Obox-Ob is well aware of the function of the *torch of revealing* and *incense of dreaming*. If queried about these items, he lies and suggests they are in fact worthless accoutrements of the Dark God's cultists (Bluff +8). If the PCs try to take the items, refuse to ally with the aspect, or enter the room, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: The Emissary (page 40).

Treasure: Hanging from two hooks near the portal to area 19 are four *purple robes of Tharizdun*. In addition, a *torch of revealing* sits in an iron sconce and from it hangs a purple pouch containing four blocks of *incense of dreaming*. See the sidebar for details on these items.

Incense of Dreaming

Price (Item Level): 50 gp (1/2)

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 3rd

Aura: Faint; (DC 16) evocation

Activation: —

Weight: —

This cone-shaped block of incense gives off a spicy and unpleasant aroma.

When you burn *incense of dreaming* in a *torch of revealing*, it causes that torch to chase away the gloom found in temples and shrines dedicated to the Dark God and also reveals magically hidden items and features of these locations. Burning this incense outside of the torch produces no effects.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, darkness.

Cost to Create: 25 gp, 2 XP.

Purple Robe of Tharizdun

Price (Item Level): — (—)

Body Slot: Body

Caster Level: 10th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 20) abjuration

Activation: —

Weight: 1 lb.

This purple robe has a pointed hood and long sleeves that extend past the hands by at least 6 inches or more.

The *purple robe of Tharizdun* protects you from the cold peculiar to temples dedicated to the Dark God. It has no other function.

The secret of manufacturing these robes has long since been lost to the world.

Torch of Revealing

Price (Item Level): — (—)

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 10th

Aura: Moderate; (DC 20) transmutation

Activation: —

Weight: 1 lb.

This black iron torch has a cupped head.

When you place *incense of dreaming* into the cup and light it, the *torch of revealing* casts violet light in a 10-foot radius and fills the air with a dreadful chill. These torches have a specific purpose: the revelation of specific, magically hidden objects within temples and shrines devoted to Tharizdun.

The secret of manufacturing these items has long since been lost to the world.

19. Temple of Shadow

An impenetrable darkness fills this room, defeating any light source, magical or otherwise, brought into this room. Only a character with a lit *torch of revealing* can see the room as it actually is.

In addition to the darkness, the room carries an incredible chill. Anyone not wearing a *purple robe of Tharizdun* takes 1d6 points of cold damage and 1d6 points of vile damage per minute spent in the temple. Anyone unprotected that touches a metal object takes an additional 2d6 points of cold damage, while characters wearing metal armor take 2d6 points of cold damage per round spent in this room.

If a character enters the room with the lit torch, read:

The queer violet light of the torch reveals a dreadfully cold, disturbing chamber. Three obsidian pillars veined with lilac worms support a soft and dripping ceiling overhead. The floor is equally giving and puddled with sickening green fluid that reflects the light strangely, offering up images of dancing demonic figures, scenes of death and carnage, and worse.

Opposite from the entrance is a great altar of basalt, constructed to resemble an upside-down ziggurat with two steps. It is the source of the impossible darkness and it holds your eye, as if seeking to draw you inside its depths.

The Obex: Any living creature that looks upon the Obex—the strange altar—must succeed on a DC 25 Will save or become hypnotized for 1d6 rounds, transfixed by the perfect darkness. At the end of this time, the victim must succeed on a second Will save against the same DC or its soul is wrenched from the body and absorbed by the Obex, where it is utterly destroyed. A character slain in this way can be brought back only by a *miracle* or *wish* spell to restore the soul and may then be raised normally.

A character that succeeds on either save cannot again be affected by the Obex for 24 hours.

The Obex has an AC 3, hardness 10, and 333 hit points. Damaging the Obex causes one black cyst to appear (see page 7 for statistics). If the characters destroy the altar, the darkness and the chilling effect in the temple end and the Essence of Shothragot takes a –5 sacred penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

20. Templars of Tharizdun

As the elder evil pulled itself free from the earth, those surviving cultists clambered inside to accompany the

abomination on its journey. The fate these servants found was death, violent and painful, at the hands of a dread demon. The only survivors of this original band were Lareth the Beautiful and his companions. While powerful in their own right, they are terrified by the forces at work inside the elder evil and rightly believe that if they venture far from their quarters they might be added to the ranks of the dead.

Since entering the temple, visions of the *Gems of Tharizdun* have plagued Lareth, along with a powerful compulsion to destroy them. He's tried to convince his allies to assist him, but neither one seems willing to risk his life on such a venture.

Although disappointed at the treatment they have received in the service of the Dark God, they are not so naïve to think they have any chance at redemption. Consequently, when confronted with a party of adventurers, each templar is prepared to fight to the death.

When the PCs enter the room, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: Templars of Tharizdun (page 42).

Taking Prisoners: Captured templars are wholly uncooperative and prove to be difficult prisoners at best. Of the three, only Lareth knows how to get through the portal without destroying the *Gems*, though he's loathe to reveal this since he knows Tharizdun will punish him. This counts as a suicidal act for the purposes of charm or compulsion spells. If the PCs intimidate the other two, they admit they believe the *Gems* might be the key to reaching the essence.

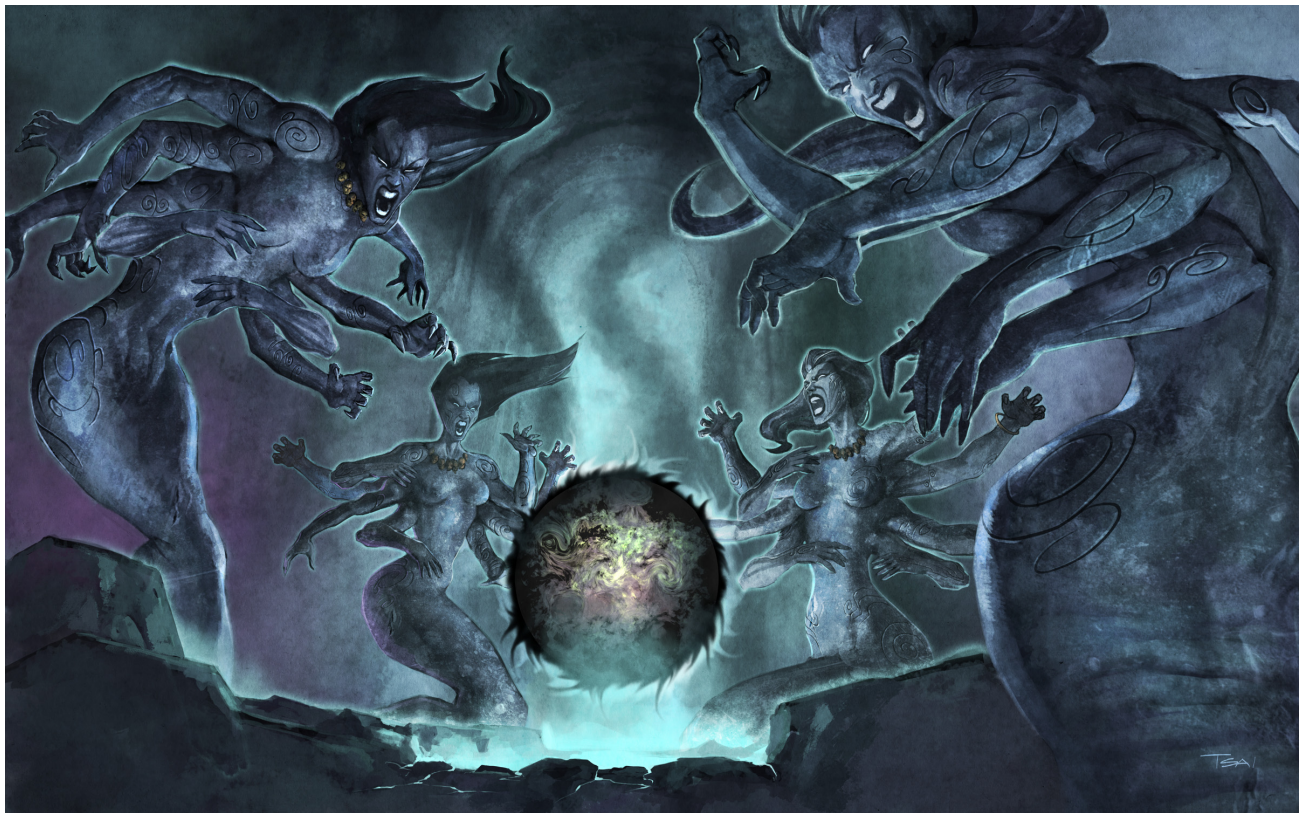
21. The Essence of Shothragot

The Essence of Shothragot is the mind and soul of the elder evil and serves as the focus of all its malevolence. If destroyed, the elder evil's body collapses in on itself, imploding and leaving nothing behind. The only way to stop this abomination and thwart its plans is to destroy the essence and thus spare countless Material Planes the destruction Tharizdun promises.

The only way to reach the Essence is through the Puce Portal (area 6), which activates only if the elder evil's sign is diminished or if the PCs find the *torch of revealing*. Once the PCs fulfill these requirements, they are free to enter the portal.

When the PCs enter the portal, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: The Essence of Shothragot (page 45).



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The ideal outcome for this adventure is for the PCs to navigate the perils of the elder evil's body, find a way through the portal, venture to the essence, and defeat it. With its destruction, the elder evil dies and decays rapidly, depositing the player characters several hundred feet over the surface of their world or stranding them in the Ethereal Plane. At your option, the PCs might appear before the elder evil's prison plane and be the first mortals to look upon the awful demesne of Tharizdun, a sanity-blasting experience to be sure.

Failure does not necessarily indicate the end of all things as the release of Tharizdun seems to suggest. If the PCs used the *torch*, but still fail to defeat the elder evil, Lareth, if he still lives, eventually destroys the *Gems of Tharizdun*, enabling the elder evil to escape the Material Plane and embark on its final journey. Faced with such a dreadful end, the gods themselves attend to the abomination. Unfortunately, the elder evil's malefic property drives them insane, causing them to fight one another, which could have incredible repercussions in your campaign. Whether or not Shothragot reaches his master is ultimately left to you, but such an event could reshape your world and prepare the way for something entirely new. Whatever you decide, the emergence and destruction of Shothragot

is a signature event that can have sweeping change on your setting, making a fight with this monster a thrilling conclusion for your campaign.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert J. Schwalb is a contract designer for Wizards of the Coast and has contributed to numerous books, including Tome of Magic, Player's Handbook II, Fiendish Codex II, Complete Scoundrel, Drow of the Underdark, Monster Manual V, Exemplars of Evil, and Elder Evils. Robert rarely emerges from his Tennessee office these days, except when dragged away from his keyboard by his incredibly patient wife, Stacey, and his pride of fiendish werewolves.

SUPPURATING VALVES

Encounter Level 17

SETUP

Two invisible cyclonic ravagers, unwholesome thralls from the Elemental Plane of Air, guard the entrances to the elder evil. They attack any creature that comes within 50 feet of a valve.

There are three locations keyed to this encounter. If a fight breaks out at one, the others do not come to help.

Before running this encounter, be sure to review Tactical Aerial Movement on page 20 of the DMG. When the PCs come within 50 feet of an entrance, read:

The light breeze disperses much of the awful stench but suddenly whips up into a screaming gale. To either side, you see two large funnel clouds form and spin toward you.

2 CYCLONIC RAVAGERS

CR 15

MM4 10

hp 169 each (26 HD); DR 10/magic

NE Large elemental (air, extraplanar)

Init +14; Senses darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +26, Spot +16

Languages Auran, Common, Infernal

AC 25, touch 25, flat-footed 15; Dodge, Mobility, deflecting winds
(-1 size, +10 Dex, +6 deflection)

Miss Chance 50 % invisibility

Immune critical hits, flanking, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

Resist improved evasion; SR 23

Fort +10, Ref +27, Will +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 90 ft. (perfect); Flyby Attack

Melee smite of seven winds +28 touch (4d6+7 or 1d6+7; see text)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +19; Grp +28

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Special Actions buffeting winds

Abilities Str 21, Dex 31, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16

SQ elemental traits

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

Skills Escape Artist +32, Hide +29, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +26, Move Silently +32, Spot

+16, Survival +23 (+25 on other planes), Use Rope +10 (+12 bindings)

Deflecting Winds (Su) A cyclonic ravager gains a +6 deflection bonus to AC.

Invisibility (Ex) As the *greater invisibility* spell, always active.

Smite of Seven Winds (Su) A cyclonic ravager can make a melee touch attack that generates a brief, rending gust of wind within its target dealing 4d6+7 points of damage. Creatures not subject to critical hits instead take 1d6+7 points of damage.

Buffeting Winds (Su) As a standard action, a cyclonic ravager can cause a tremendous surge of storm-strength winds in a 100-foot radius burst centered on itself. A creature within this area must succeed on a DC 28 Reflex save or be pushed up to 30 feet in a direction of the ravager's choice. A creature can choose to fail this save voluntarily. A ravager can push a creature to a location outside the area of this effect, but the pushed creature can't end up in another creature's or object's space. The save DC is Strength-based.

A creature takes a -4 penalty on this save per size category below Medium. Bigger creatures gain a +4 bonus per size category above Medium.

When the ravager activates this ability, it can choose to affect some creatures within its area while ignoring others.

TACTICS

Both cyclonic ravagers use their buffeting winds ability to disperse the player characters, sending some against the outer walls of the elder evils, others into acidic waterfalls, and move lightly armored spellcasters to well within the ravager's reach to provoke attacks of opportunity. Characters on the decks of vehicles, *flying carpets*, and similar conveyances that fail their Reflex saves are knocked back 30 feet and may fall off to plummet to the ground. Thereafter, the cyclonic ravagers use Flyby Attack to harass the PCs.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

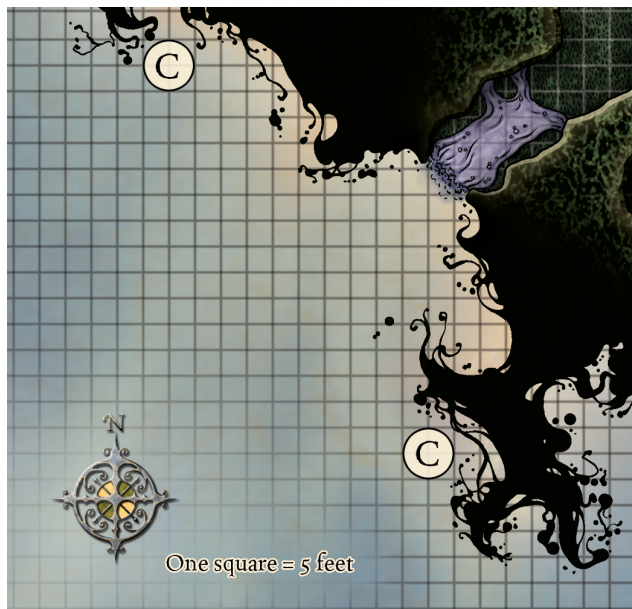
The area has the following features.

Acidic Waterfall: Spilling forth from the valve is a torrent of thin acid. Any creature that enters a space containing acid, including those beneath the waterfall, take 5d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 20 half).

Contracting Entrance: Once every 1d4 rounds, the valve seals shut at the start of the round. Any creature standing on the edge of the entrance must succeed on a DC 25 Reflex save or take 10d6 points of bludgeoning damage as the walls close. Those who succeed on the save may place themselves beyond the walls or inside the complex. A closed valve reopens after 1d4 rounds.

Elemental Bursts: The elder evil's epidermis is an unholy fusion of all four elements—air, earth, fire, and water, and periodically, the instability of its form unleashes a burst of elemental energy. Any creature within 20 feet of the elder evil's exterior has a 10% chance of being exposed to such a burst. If so, the target takes 4d6 points of cold damage, 4d6 points of fire damage, and 4d6 points of unholy damage (Reflex DC 25 half).

Epidermis: The elder evil's outer walls writhe with profane energies. Any living creature that touches the elder evil's outer walls automatically gains one negative level and takes 6d6 points of cold damage, 6d6 points of fire damage, and 6d6 points of unholy damage (Reflex DC 25 half).



CYST OF MADNESS

Encounter Level 20

SETUP

Have the players place their miniatures at the bottom of the map in the entrance. Once they are positioned, place the slaves of Obox-Ob where indicated on the map. When the PCs enter the room, read:

A number of three-legged creatures rise from the floor of this irregularly-shaped chamber, fixing their multitudinous eyes upon you.

8 SLAVES OF OBOX-OB **CR 14**
hp 187 each (22 HD); fast healing 5; DR 15/lawful

Elite draudnu^{MM5}

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, obyrith)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Listen +28, Spot +28

Aura form of madness (60 ft., DC 25)

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17; Dodge, Mobility (+5 Dex, +7 natural)

Immune acid, mind-affecting effects, poison

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

Fort +17, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares); Spring Attack

Melee 3 flesh hooks +26 (3d6+4/19–20 plus immobilize)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (20 ft. with flesh hook)

Base Atk +22; **Grp** +26

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Whirlwind Attack, aligned strike (chaos, evil)

Special Actions acid spray

Abilities Str 18, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 18

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (flesh hooks), Improved Natural Attack (flesh hook), Mobility, Spring Attack, Track^B, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Balance +42, Climb +29, Escape Artist +30, Jump +49, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +28, Search +17, Spot +28, Survival +28 (+30 on other planes, +30 following tracks), Tumble +34, Use Rope +5 (+7 bindings)

True Seeing (Ex) As the *true seeing* spell, always active.

Form of Madness (Su) All creatures within 60 feet of a slave of Obox-Ob must succeed on a DC 25 Will save or believe something grows inside them, becoming

sickened permanently. Only a *greater restoration*, *heal*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell cures this insanity. A creature that successfully saves cannot again be affected by the same slave's form of madness for 24 hours, and a creature that fails can be affected only once until cured. Chaotic evil outsiders are immune to this ability. This is a mind-affecting effect and the save DC is Charisma-based.

Immobilize (Ex) When a draudnu deals damage with a flesh hook, it can detach the end of that hook in the foe it struck, fastening the opponent to a surface such as a floor or wall. (The draudnu's hook end regrows immediately.) That enemy must succeed on a DC 21 Reflex save or be immobilized (unable to move from the space in which it starts its turn). This ability doesn't work if the hook can't fasten a creature to a surface.

An immobilized creature can pull itself free by taking a move action and making a DC 21 Strength check or Escape Artist check. The act of pulling free deals 1d10 points of damage unless it or someone else first spends a standard action to successfully make a DC 21 Heal check to first dislodge the hook. The save DCs are Strength-based.

Acid Spray (Ex) Whenever a draudnu takes damage, it deals 2d4 points of acid damage to all creatures in a 5-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 21 half). The save DC is Constitution-based.

TACTICS

The demons herd the PCs to spaces containing acid and use flesh hook attacks to pin them in place. The demons then use Spring Attack to lance lightly armored characters and then fall back to lure warriors deeper into the room.

DEVELOPMENT

The molydeus in area 5 automatically hears a pitched battle in this location. Starting on the second round, it moves 80 feet each round, joining the combat 3 rounds into the combat. It hates the slaves of Obox-Ob as much as it hates the PCs and attacks the closest creature each round. See Tactical Encounter 5 for tactics.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Acid Pool: The acid pools are 1 foot deep and cost 2 squares of movement to enter. The DC of Tumble checks in such a square increases by 2. Creatures that move through a space containing an acid pool take 2d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 15 half), while characters ending their movement in these squares take 4d6 points of acid damage (no save). An equal amount of water dilutes the acid so that it deals no damage.

Lighting: Illumination from the acid pools fills this chamber in shadowy light, granting all creatures concealment (20% miss chance).

Rubble: A space containing rubble costs 3 squares of movement to enter and the DC of Move Silently and Tumble checks in such a square increases by 5.



POOL OF MOLTEN ICE

Encounter Level 18

SETUP

Guarding this chamber is a waterveiled assassin and two holocaust disciples. The creatures detest the other and they frequently trade insults in Common. However, sounds of combat from an adjacent room cause them to be silent. Place the holocaust disciples on the map where indicated. Wait to place the waterveiled assassin on the map until its turn or until a character has line of sight to its position and beats a Hide check with a Spot check. If any character touches the water or lands on the island, or if the PCs trigger the trap, read:

The balls of fire unfold into vague humanoid shapes, flaring brightly above the waters and emanating waves of heat from their forms.

When the waterveiled assassin reveals itself or is spotted, read:

Surging from the foul water is a great tidal wave and in its midst, a grotesque face forms and looses a dreadful howl.

WATERVEILED ASSASSIN

CR 15

MM4 13

hp 169 (26 HD); fast healing 5; DR 10/—

NE Large elemental (extraplanar, water)

Init +10; Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +20, Spot +20

Languages Aquan, Common

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 19
(–1 size, +6 Dex, +10 natural)

Immune critical hits, flanking, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

Resist liquid body; SR 23

Fort +17, Ref +16, Will +13

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 60 ft.; malleable form

Melee slam +26 (4d8+10)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 20 ft.

Base Atk +19; Grp +30

Atk Options Combat Reflexes

Special Actions churn, engulf

Abilities Str 25, Dex 23, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12
SQ elemental traits, one with water

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (slam),

Iron Will, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Move Silently), Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Hide +19, Listen +20, Move Silently +23, Spot +20, Swim +15

Liquid Body (Ex) A waterveiled assassin exercises supreme control over its watery form, allowing it to flow around attacks, flatten itself against the ground to avoid a spell's blast, and so forth. Any effect or spell that allows a Reflex save for half damage has a 50% chance to have no effect on a waterveiled assassin.

Malleable Form (Ex) A waterveiled assassin's control over its form allows it to flow through tiny cracks in objects and move through the earth, walls, and other obstacles. The assassin moves at normal speed through terrain that slows movement. It can move through permeable objects at half speed, but it cannot move through completely solid barriers.

If the assassin ends its movement completely within an object, opponents do not have line of sight or line of effect to it. Its reach drops to 0 feet. Any creatures engulfed within the assassin (see entry) fall out, dropping prone at the end of the object. If only part of the assassin is in any object, but its remaining space cannot hold all the creatures within it, the assassin chooses which ones to release.

Churn (Ex) As a swift action, a waterveiled assassin can create mighty currents within its body that grind engulfed creatures, dealing 5d6 points of bludgeoning damage. An engulfed creature that succeeds on a DC 30 Fortitude save takes half damage. The save DC is Strength-based.

Engulf (Ex) As a standard action, a waterveiled assassin can flow over Medium or smaller creatures, entrapping them within its liquid form. The assassin simply moves into the opponents' spaces; any creature whose space it completely covers is subject to the engulf attack. The assassin cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. It can engulf as many creatures as fit in its space.

Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the assassin, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on a DC 30 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success, a creature moves aside or back (opponent's choice) to move out of the assassin's path. The save DC is Strength-based.

Engulfed creatures are considered to be grappled within the assassin's body, and they are subject to its churn attack. Engulfed creatures that breathe air might drown (DMG 304).

2 HOLOCAUST DISCIPLES

CR 15

MM4 11

hp 221 each (26 HD); fast healing 5; DR 10/magic

NE Large elemental (extraplanar, fire)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +23, Spot +23

Aura heat (15 ft., DC 27)

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan, Terran

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(–1 size, +5 Dex, +7 natural)

Immune critical hits, fire, flanking, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

SR 23

Fort +20, **Ref** +28, **Will** +21

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee fire bolt +24 touch (8d6 fire/19–20)

Ranged fire bolt +24 touch (8d6 fire/19–20)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +19; **Grp** +28

Atk Options magic strike

Special Actions flame wave

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th):

At will—*fireball* (DC 19), *fire shield* (warm only, DC 20)

3/day—*wall of fire*

1/day—*meteor swarm* (DC 25)

Abilities Str 21, Dex 21, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 22

SQ elemental grace

Feats Ability Focus (flame wave), Alertness, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (fire bolt), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (fire bolt)

Skills Climb +21, Concentration +24 (+28 casting on the defensive), Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +23, Spellcraft +20, Spot +23, Survival +5 (+7 on other planes)

Heat Aura (Su) At the end of each of their turns, creatures within 15 feet of a holocaust disciple must succeed on DC 27 Fortitude saves or be fatigued. A successful save negates the effect. A fatigued creature that fails its save becomes exhausted. A creature must attempt this saving throw each round it is within range, whether or not it has succeeded on an earlier save. A creature that has resistance or immunity to fire damage is immune to this effect, as is a creature that is not subject to the effects of extreme heat conditions. The fatigued and exhausted conditions end 1 minute after leaving the aura's area of effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Fire Bolt (Su) A holocaust disciple can aim a bolt of fire at a single target as a melee or ranged touch attack. The ranged touch attack has a maximum range of 200 feet with no range increment.

Flame Wave (Su) Once per round as a standard action,

a holocaust disciple can generate a wave of flame that rolls out from its body. Any creature within 60 feet of the holocaust disciple must succeed on a DC 29 Reflex save or take 13d6 points of fire damage. A successful save results in half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Elemental Grace (Su) A holocaust disciple gains a bonus equal to its Charisma bonus on all saving throws (included).

TACTICS

Both holocaust disciples position themselves so most, if not all, of the PCs are within 60 feet. Then, they use their flame wave ability, spreading fiery death in all directions. One disciple then casts *meteor swarm* at a heavily armored character (+24 ranged touch) standing in the largest group of characters, while the second rings the PCs with a *wall of fire*. Over the following rounds, the first holocaust disciple hurls fire bolts at isolated PCs, while the other casts *meteor swarm* and *fireball* spells to harass larger groups of characters. Should any of the PCs close on the elementals, neither hesitates to generate another flame wave.

Meanwhile, the waterveiled assassin stays underwater but moves to shore's edge to make attacks of opportunity against characters that enter spaces it threatens or cast spells, using Combat Reflexes as needed. Should any PC enter the water, the waterveiled assassin moves to engulf the hapless character and churns as a swift action.

If the PCs negate the *prismatic wall*, the holocaust disciples pursue the characters. The waterveiled assassin stays behind.

DEVELOPMENT

If the PCs have yet to deal with the Molydeus in area 5, it moves to investigate the sounds of combat, arriving in 2 rounds. The demon is as likely to attack the PCs as it is the elementals, so it trains its attacks on the closest foe each round.

CONCLUSION

Embedded all over the island are the 333 *Gems of Tharizdun*. Each gemstone has a hardness of 20 and 5 hit points. For every 111 gemstones destroyed, the essence of Shothragot takes a –2 circumstance penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks. In addition, destroying all the gems reduces the sign's intensity by one step.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Island: The island rising from the center of the pool counts as difficult terrain. Each space costs 2 squares of movement and the DCs of Tumble checks increase by 2.

Water: The water in this room is 60-foot deep and is stagnant. Characters can move through the water with a successful DC 10 Swim check. Efforts to destroy the water work for 1 round before more fluid seeps from the walls to restore it to its proper depth.

The waterveiled assassin gains a +8 bonus to AC and +4 bonus on Reflex saves against attacks made from characters on land.

Treasure: Behind the island and under the water is a *bag of holding* type IV. Finding the bag requires a DC 25 Search check. If located, opening it reveals 1,493 pp, a lead scepter studded with opals (worth 2,500 gp), a bright green emerald (worth 5,000 gp), an *angelhelm*^{MIC}, and a *torc of displacement*^{MIC}. The elder evil swallowed the *bag* along with a recovered *gem of Tharizdun* months ago.



GEMS OF THARIZDUN

When Tharizdun was chained in his prison, sealed away for eternity, his last act was to contain fragments of his essence in 333 black gemstones that would enable his scions and servitors to unlock the shackles that bind him. Each gem is a fist-sized rock resembling obsidian, but queerly translucent if held to the light. Prying a gem free from the rock requires a DC 20 Strength check.

Most believe these gems to be simple baubles or props used by mad clerics in their rituals, but in truth, these items have power. Characters wielding a stone can cast spells and spell-like effects with the chaos or evil descriptors at +1 caster level (this stacks with the Chaos and Evil domains' granted powers). In addition, the wielder of the gem can unlock its wisdom and gain a +20 insight bonus on any one attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or ability check as an immediate action. Once used, the stone loses all properties until the next midnight.

Unfortunately, these stones are also infused with the raw essence of the Dark God and those who carry these items soon feel the weight of their power in the form of madness and physical corruption. Each day, the wielder must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or take 1 point of Wisdom drain, and succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Constitution drain.

CARNAGE

Encounter Level 19

SETUP

The molydeus is invisible and occupies a spot indicated on the map if the PCs come from the bottom. Otherwise, it starts on the opposite side if they come from the top. When the molydeus attacks, or if the demon is detected, read:

Charging toward you, barking a challenge from both its vicious hyena head and its spitting serpent head, is a massive fiend drenched in blood. It grips a terrifying battleaxe stained black with gore and flings droplets of blood into the air as the horror whips the blade about.

MOLYDEUS

CR 19

FC1 46

hp 275 (19 HD); fast healing 30; **DR** 15/cold iron and good

CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, tanar'ri)

Init +10; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Listen +29, Spot +29

Languages Abyssal, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 40, touch 17, flat-footed 33

(-1 size, +6 Dex, +4 armor, +3 deflection, +18 natural)

Immune electricity, flanking, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10, evasion; **SR** 30

Fort +21, **Ref** +17, **Will** +18

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee +1 *dancing vorpal cold iron greataxe*
+28/+23/+18/+13 (3d6+14/19-20/x3) and
bite +25 (2d6+4) and
bite +25 (1d6+4 plus poison) or

Melee +1 *dancing vorpal cold iron greataxe*
+28/+23/+18/+13 (3d6+14/19-20/x3) and
2 claws each +27 (1d6+9) and
bite +25 (2d6+4) and
bite +25 (1d6+4 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +19; **Grp** +32

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*telekinesis*), aligned strike (chaos, evil), piercing strike, poison, snakebite

Special Actions *summon tanar'ri*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th):

At will—*baleful polymorph* (DC 24), *blasphemy* (DC

26), *blindness/deafness* (DC 20), *charm person* (DC 20), *fear* (DC 23), *fly*, *greater dispel magic*, *invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only), *suggestion* (DC 23), *telekinesis* (DC 24), *vampiric touch* (+23 melee touch)

7/day—*dimension lock*, *lightning bolt* (DC 22)

3/day—quicken *telekinesis* (DC 24)

1/day—*trap the soul* (DC 28)

Abilities Str 28, Dex 22, Con 30, Int 21, Wis 24, Cha 28

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiattack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*telekinesis*), Track^B

Skills Bluff +31, Concentration +32, Diplomacy +35, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Forgery +27, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (religion) +27, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Listen +29, Search +27, Sense Motive +29, Spot +29, Survival +29 (+31 following tracks, +31 on other planes), Use Magic Device +31

Possessions +1 *dancing vorpal cold iron greataxe*, *ring of evasion*, *ring of protection* +3, *bracers of armor* +4, gems worth 1,000 gp

All-Around Vision (Ex) A molydeus gains a +4 racial bonus on Search and Spot checks (included) and cannot be flanked.

True Seeing (Ex) As the *true seeing* spell, always active.

Dancing Vorpal Axe (Ex) A molydeus's +1 *dancing vorpal cold iron greataxe* is an extension of its being. If the molydeus is slain, its axe melts away into ichor. A molydeus whose axe is destroyed can manifest a new one by taking part in a ritual on the Woeful Escarand (the 400th layer of the Abyss), where it uses manes as the raw materials to forge the weapon anew. Once the new axe is created, the previous axe (or its remains) melts away.

Piercing Strike (Su) The first time a molydeus strikes a foe, damage reduction applies normally. All following strikes automatically ignore damage reduction, save for damage reduction that requires a specific material to bypass, epic damage reduction, or damage reduction that doesn't allow any form of bypass.

Poison (Su) Snake bite—Injury, Fort DC 29, 2d6 Con drain/2d6 Con drain. A creature reduced to 0 Constitution by this poison immediately transforms into a mane (FC1 45 or substitute with a dretch). Only a *miracle* or *wish* can reverse this transformation. Molydeus poison is a supernatural substance and can harm creatures ordinarily immune to poison, although the effects are reduced to 1d6 Con for initial and secondary damage.

Snakebite (Ex) A molydeus can use its snake head to

make a single attack each round as a free action. The snake head always strikes as a secondary attack.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp) Automatically summon 1d6 babaus, 1d4 chasmes (FC1 34), or 1 marilith, 1/day. Caster level 19th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

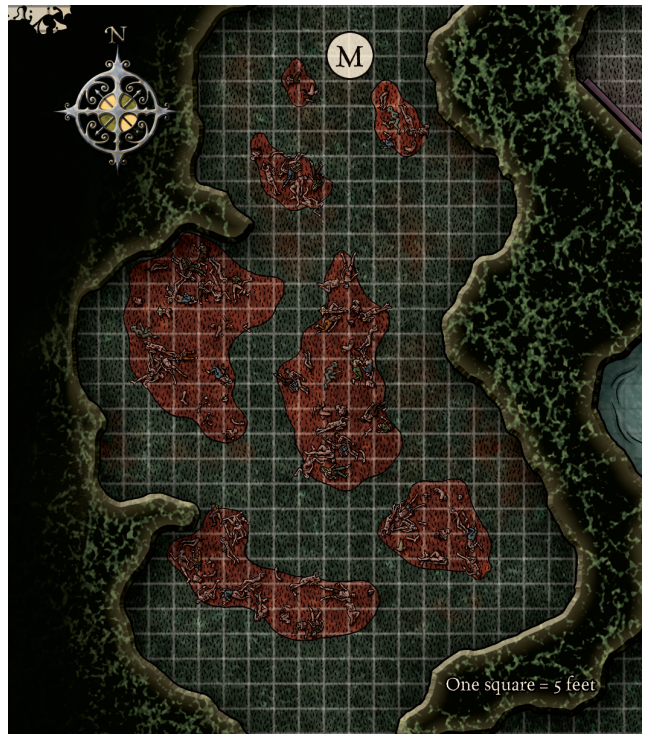
TACTICS

Lacking many of its more useful spell-like abilities, the molydeus relies on a straightforward approach. It charges the closest character, letting loose its dancing weapon and following up with its bite and claw attacks. It focuses its attacks against one opponent at a time, periodically falling back to cast *blasphemy* and a quickened *telekinesis* to drive off its target's allies.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Bloody Bodies: The bloody bodies count as difficult terrain and when combined with the normal terrain effects, each space requires 3 squares of movement to enter. Chaotic or evil creatures that begin their turns in these spaces gain a +2 profane bonus on attacks and damage rolls, while chaotic *and* evil creatures gain a +5 profane bonus instead. A successful turn undead attempt against a 20 HD monster destroys one 5-foot square of bloody bodies.



PUCE PORTAL

Encounter Level 19

SETUP

Place the varakhut where indicated on the map. Have the players put their miniatures near the entrance of the map unless they first parlayed with the inevitable, in which case they may place their miniatures wherever they wish in the room. When the varakhut attacks, read:

The fiery red eye flares with outrage as it intones dread words of grave magical power.

VARAKHUT

CR 19

FF 103

hp 151 (22 HD); fast healing 30; DR 20/adamantine and chaotic

LE Large construct (extraplanar, lawful)

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal

AC 35, touch 11, flat-footed 33
(-1 size, +2 Dex, +24 natural)

Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save, no risk of death from massive damage

SR 30

Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +13

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 50 ft. (good); Flyby Attack

Melee 2 slams +21 each (2d10+6)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +16; Grp +26

Atk Options adamantine strike, aligned strike (lawful)

Special Actions dispelling blast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th):

At will—*circle of death* (DC 22), *dimension door*, *dominate monster* (DC 25), *haste*, *hold monster* (DC 21), *locate creature*, *true seeing*

3/day—quicken *circle of death* (DC 22), quicken *dimension door*, *forcecage*, *greater teleport* (self plus 520 lb. objects only), *limited wish*, *mark of justice*, *time stop*

1/day—*geas/quest* (DC 22), *meteor swarm* (DC 25), *plane shift* (+22 melee touch, DC 23), *soul bind* (DC 25), *wish*

Abilities Str 22, Dex 15, Con —, Int 18, Wis 19, Cha 22

SQ construct traits

Feats Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*circle of death*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*dimension door*), Superior Initiative

Skills Decipher Script +29, Jump +14, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Knowledge (religion) +29, Knowledge (the planes) +29, Spellcraft +33, Survival +4 (+8 on other planes)

Dispelling Blast (Sp) As *greater dispel magic*, 3/day, caster level 19th. This ability functions as the spell but it affects everything in a 30-foot-radius burst.

TACTICS

The varakhut casts a quickened *circle of death* spell to wipe out any cohorts, followers, and animal companions and then casts *forcecage* to entrap any obvious spellcasters, using the windowless cell option. If possible, the inevitable positions the *forcecage* in a place to block the party's means of escape.

On the round following, the varakhut casts *meteor swarm* (+17 ranged touch), targeting heavily armored characters first and then nondivine spellcasters second. Each round thereafter, the varakhut uses *hold monster* and *forcecage*, though it is sure to hold at least one *forcecage* back for the elder evil.

The varakhut, being a defender of the gods, has little interest in destroying divine servants, even ones it suspects of being in cahoots with the elder evil. Rather than attacking these creatures, the varakhut uses *dominate monster* to force them to fight at its side and aid it in its quest to destroy the elder evil and its minions.

BEFRIENDING THE INEVITABLE

Even after combat begins, the PCs may persuade the inevitable of their intentions. Allow any PCs who wish to keep trying to befriend the inevitable to make Diplomacy checks as full-round actions (note that hasty Diplomacy imposes a -10 penalty on the check). If the PCs improve the inevitable's attitude to indifferent, it breaks off the attack and returns to its pounding. Improving its attitude to friendly has the same effect, except the inevitable releases any PCs trapped by *forcecages* or influenced by other magical effects it cast.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Portal: While the elder evil's sign is at overwhelming strength, the portal does not function. Only when the light of a *torch of revealing* shines upon its surface can the PCs make the journey to area 22. Otherwise, the PCs must destroy the *Gems of Tharizdun*.

Any living creature adjacent to the portal when active or not must succeed on a DC 25 Will save or take 1 point of Wisdom drain.

THE DARK GOD'S PRISON

Encounter Level 20

SETUP

The scions of madness are positioned where shown on the map. Smoke and fire conceals them, so wait to place them until the PCs spot them. Have the players place their miniatures anywhere at the bottom of the map, but not on the paths or in the burning cinders. When a character enters a space adjacent to the effigy, read:

Hanging from the ceiling on a thick iron chain is a cage holding a smoking prisoner, its face blackened by the flames. Its mouth stretches wide, frozen in a perpetual scream. Bits of cloth, still aflame, cover the remains of the wretched inhabitant. Suddenly, a cloud of fire leaks out of the corpse's mouth and eyes to form into a transparent humanoid shape cloaked in fire.

When a character first comes within 30 feet of a scion of madness, read:

Striding forth from the smoke and fire is a 10-foot-tall giant wreathed in yellow flames. Two great horns protrude from its brow, casting its monstrous face into shadows. The greatsword it readies flares with life as if eager for your blood.

3 SCIONS OF MADNESS

CR 16

MM5 48, ToB 15
hp 224 each (18 HD)

Male ken-li elemental mage^{MM5} swordmage 6^{ToB}
CE Large giant (fire)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +14, Spot +9
Aura wreathed in flame (5 ft.)

Languages Common, Giant, Ignan

AC 30, touch 19, flat-footed 26
(-1 size, +4 Dex, +4 class, +2 armor, +2 deflection, +9 natural)

Immune fire, smoke

Fort +18, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee +3 greatsword +22/+17/+12 (3d6+12/19-20) or
2 slams +18 each (1d6+6) or
gore +18 (1d8+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +23

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, disci-

pline focus (Stone Dragon; insightful strike, Weapon Focus)

Special Actions flame breath

Maneuvers and Stances Known (1L 6th):

Stances—blood in the water, child of shadow, step of the wind

Strikes—bonecrusher, charging minotaur†, clinging shadow strike†, death mark†, flashing sun†, mighty throw†, sapphire nightmare blade, stone bones, stone vise†

Boosts—distracting ember, sudden leap

Disciplines: Desert Wind, Diamond Mind, Setting Sun, Shadow Hand, Stone Dragon, Tiger Claw

† Readied maneuvers

Abilities Str 22, Dex 18, Con 26, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 10
SQ shared strength

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Balance +12, Climb +10, Concentration +14, Handle Animal +4, Hide +2, Intimidate +8, Jump +18, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +14, Move Silently +8, Search +5, Spot +9, Tumble +5

Possessions +3 greatsword, ring of protection +2, bracers of armor +2, gauntlets of ogre power, shards of obsidian (600 gp)

Wreathed in Flame (Su) Creatures take 1d3 points of fire damage at the end of a scion's turn if they are within 5 feet of it. Furthermore, creatures that strike or touch a scion with their body or a weapon take 1d3 points of fire damage. A creature can take damage from touching or striking a scion only once per turn. The scion may suppress this ability at will.

Elemental magi are immune to this ability.

Discipline Focus (Ex) The scions function as if they had Weapon Focus for the greatsword, heavy mace, and unarmed strike. In addition, whenever it executes bonecrusher, charging minotaur, or stone vise, it deals an additional 4 points of damage.

Flame Breath (Su) 30-foot line, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 6d6 fire, Reflex DC 24 half. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Elemental mages are immune to this ability.

Shared Strength (Su) When a scion is within 60 feet of one or more elemental mages and must make a saving throw, it uses the highest save bonus among the group.

EFFIGY

MM2 89
hp 202 (27 HD)

CE Medium undead (fire, incorporeal)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +35, Spot +35
Languages understands Common

AC 20, touch 19, flat-footed 18
(+2 Dex, +3 deflection, +5 natural)

Immune undead immunities

SR 28

Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +20

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect); Flyby Attack
Melee touch +13 (1d6/19–20 plus 2d6 fire plus energy drain)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** —

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, energy drain, fiery touch

Special Actions infuse

Abilities Str —, Dex 15, Con —, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 17

SQ incorporeal traits, undead traits

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (touch), Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (touch)

Skills Balance +34, Hide +28, Listen +35, Search +33, Spot +35, Survival +5 (+9 following tracks), Tumble +32

Energy Drain (Su) Living creatures hit by an effigy's touch attack gain two negative levels. The DC is 26 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. The save DC is Charisma-based. For each negative level bestowed, the effigy gains 5 temporary hit points. Temporary hit points last for 1 hour, and an effigy can only gain a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its normal hit point total.

Fiery Touch (Ex) An effigy deals an extra 2d6 points of fire damage on a successful touch attack.

Infuse (Su) As *magic jar*, at will, Will DC 26 negates. This ability functions as the spell, except that the body's natural attacks and attacks made by weapons deal an additional 2d6 points of fire damage. In addition, the possessed body takes 2d6 points of fire damage and gains two negative levels each round. Once reduced to –10 hit points, the effigy leaves the flaming corpse.

Each round, the subject is entitled to an opposed Wisdom check to eject the effigy. A success forces the effigy to leave and retreat 30 feet. A failed check indicates the effigy remains in control for another round. A successful save or Wisdom check makes the target immune to the same effigy's infusion attacks for 24 hours.

CR 17

TACTICS

Whenever a scion of madness first perceives a foe, it drops into the step of the wind stance as a swift action (allowing it to ignore difficult terrain and gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and a +4 bonus on Strength or Dexterity checks on bull rush and trip attempts against opponents that take a move penalty from the terrain) and then activates the charging minotaur maneuver to push the opponent off the path and into a flame jet if possible. The scion then uses stone vise to restrict the target's movement and ensure additional fire damage, Improved Sunder to destroy weapons, and mighty throw to fling its enemies into flame jets or areas of flaming cinders. The scions reserve their flame breath attacks for retreating PCs.

The effigy slips loose from its cage whenever a PC comes within 10 feet. It uses Flyby Attack to deliver a touch attack and on a success, it attempts to infuse itself with its victim. If this fails, it selects a new target until it successfully infuses itself. Once installed, it turns on the PCs, aiding the scions of madness by gaining flanks or attacking soft targets such as wizards, warlocks, and similar foes.

TOME OF BATTLE MANEUVERS

If you don't have *Tome of Battle*, you can use these maneuver summaries to help run the encounter.

Charging Minotaur: As a full-round action, charge and make bull rush as part of the charge without provoking an attack of opportunity. If your Strength check beats your opponent's, you deal bludgeoning damage equal to 2d6 + your Strength modifier in addition to the effects of the bull rush.

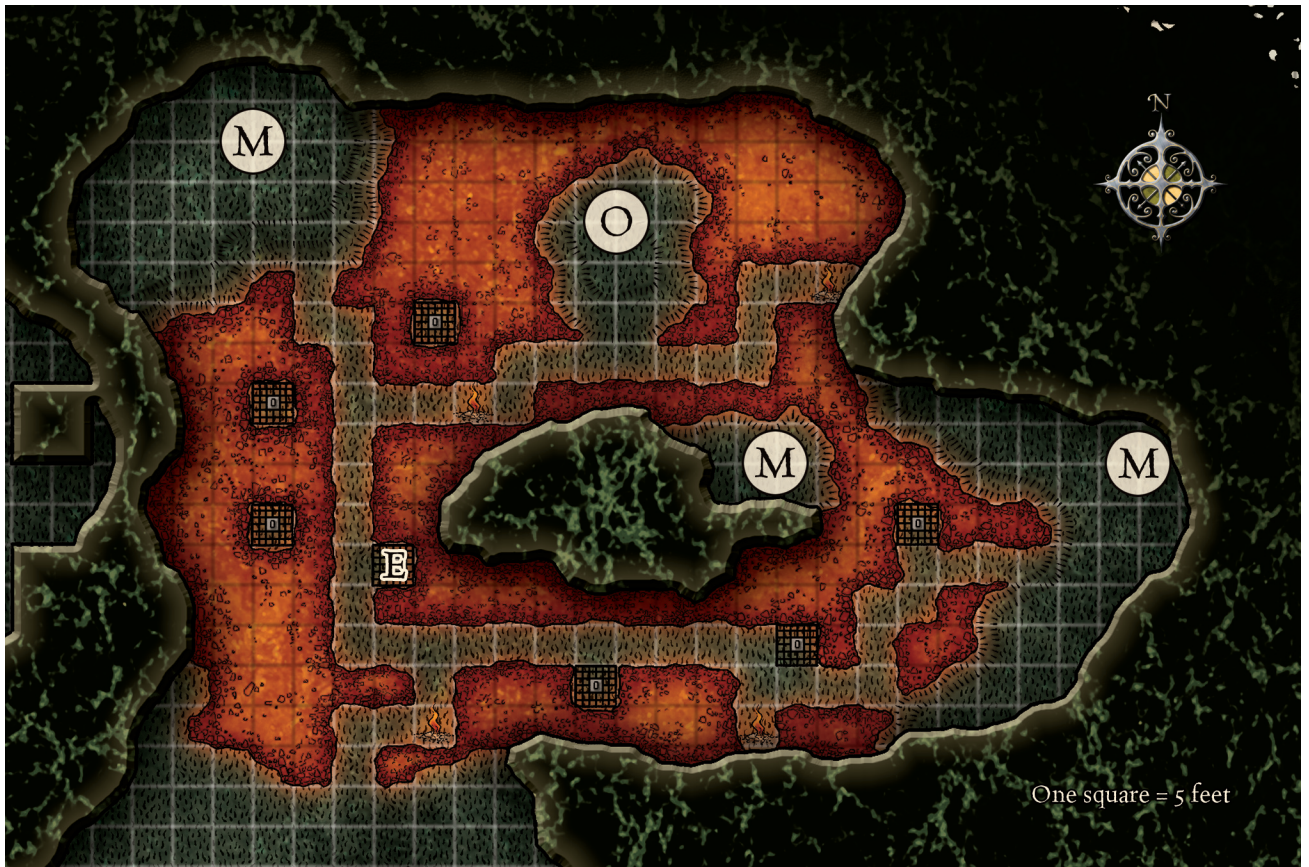
Clinging Shadow Strike: As a standard action, make a single attack. If it hits, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage and your target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or take a 20% miss chance on all attacks for 1 round.

Death Mark: Standard action; make one attack, if successful the opponent bursts into flames (Small 5 ft., Medium 10 ft., Large 20 ft.) dealing 6d6 points of fire damage to all creatures in the area (DC 17)

Flashing Sun: As a full-round action, make normal attacks plus one attack at the highest attack bonus. All attacks take a –2 penalty.

Mighty Throw: As standard action, make a touch attack to trip an opponent. If successful, you throw the opponent up to 20 feet away. Thrown targets do not provoke attacks of opportunity from their movement.

Stone Vise: As a standard action, make a single melee attack that deals an extra 1d6 points of damage. If the target is on the ground, the attack reduces its speed to 0 feet for 1 round. A DC 18 Fortitude save negate the immobilization.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Slope: Spaces containing slopes are filled with rubble and count as difficult terrain, and the DCs for Move Silently and Tumble checks increase by +2.

Smoke: This room is filled with smoke, granting concealment (20% miss chance) to all creatures in the area. In addition, all living creatures must succeed on a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round choking and coughing. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. The scions of madness are accustomed to the poor air and are immune to its effects.

Flaming Cinders: Spaces containing flaming cinders count as difficult terrain, and characters who begin their turn in these spaces take 6d6 points of fire damage if on

the ground or 2d6 points of fire damage if flying or levitating.

Fire Jet: 30-ft. line, 8d6 fire, Reflex DC 25 half. Any character stepping into this space triggers the jet.

Cages: The cages hang 10 feet above the floor and contain the remains of dead clerics, levels 10+1d6 (see DMG for statistics). The clerics are aware of the elder evil's intent plus everything in the adventure background, and they may reveal information from that section based on the questions the PCs ask. If *raised* or *resurrected*, the clerics prove ungrateful and uncooperative.

Offering: A +3 *cold iron greatsword* lies on a rocky outcropping toward the back of the room. Once owned by a mighty champion of Kord, the weapon was left here to melt to slag after his brutal murder.

FETID CLUSTER

Encounter Level 20

SETUP

Place the corrupted hive mother where indicated on the map. Choose two of the beholder pits to hold the other corrupted beholders, but wait to place them until their turn. Have the players place their miniatures near the lip of the portal when the encounter begins.

The corrupted hive mother should make Listen checks to hear the sounds of climbing PCs (DC 15), conversation (DC 17), or any other noises. If she succeeds, she readies an action to use Disjunction Ray on the first intruder she sees so that she can cancel any magical effects cast by him. When the first character reaches the edge of the portal, read:

Hovering in the air is a spheroid creature bristling with eye-stalks and razor-sharp plates of chitin and bone. Orange corruption oozes from numerous rents and fissures in its hide. Burst blisters weep an equally noxious substance and its many rheumy eyes glare in outrage. Its broad mouth spreads in a frown causing a fresh torrent of slime to spill onto the floor. Numerous pits pierce the floor. Statues of robed men and women stand scattered throughout the chamber, all carved in terrified positions.

The corrupted beholders that hide in the pits reveal themselves on their turns, rising just far enough for their eyestalks to crest the lips of the pits. Whenever a corrupted beholder emerges from the pit, read:

A forest of dripping eyestalks climbs up from the darkened pit to look around.

CORRUPTED HIVE MOTHER

CR 19

BV 186, LM 135

hp 250 (20 HD); fast healing 10; DR 15/good and silver
CE Huge aberration

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +27, Spot +31

Languages Abyssal, Beholder, Common, Draconic, Ignan

AC 42, touch 9, flat-footed 41
(-2 size, +1 Dex, +33 natural)

Immune acid, flanking

Fort +16, Ref +7, Will +16

Speed 5 ft. (1 square), fly 20 ft. (good); Flyby Attack

Melee bite +22 (3d6+13 plus 10 vile)

Ranged eye rays +14 touch

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +15; Grp +32

Atk Options disruptive attack, improved grab, swallow whole

Special Actions antimagic cone, command beholder, Disjunction Ray, eye rays

Abilities Str 28, Dex 12, Con 26, Int 21, Wis 15, Cha 23

SQ all-around vision, flight

Feats Alertness^B, Disjunction Ray^{LM}, Flyby Attack, Focused Antimagic^{LM}, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will

Skills Hide +16, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (religion) +28, Knowledge (the planes) +28, Listen +27, Search +31, Spot +31, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes, +4 following tracks)

Disruptive Attack (Su) A corrupted hive mother deals an additional 10 points of vile damage on a successful bite attack. Vile damage can be healed only by magic cast within the area of a *consecrate* or *hallow* spell.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a corrupt hive mother must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold.

Swallow Whole (Ex) A corrupted hive mother can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of up to two sizes smaller by making a successful grapple check.

The swallowed creature takes 2d8+7 points of bludgeoning damage and 2d8 points of acid damage and 10 points of vile damage per round from the corrupt hive mother's gizzard. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 15 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 26). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

A corrupted hive mother's gizzard can hold 2 Medium, 8 Small, 32 Tiny or smaller opponents.

Antimagic Cone (Su) A corrupted hive mother's central eye continually produces a 240-foot cone of antimagic. This functions just like an *antimagic field* (caster level 20th). All spell-like and supernatural powers and effects within the cone are suppressed—even the corrupted hive mother's own eye rays. Once each round, during its turn, the corrupted hive mother decides whether the antimagic cone is active or not.

Command Beholder (Sp) As the *dominate monster* spell, at will, Will DC 30 negates, caster level 20th.

This ability function as the spell but it functions only

on beholders and beholderkin. Hive mothers are immune to this ability. If the corrupt hive mother loses control of a dominated beholder, the corrupt hive mother immediately senses the loss of control, and knows the position and distance to the beholder at the time control was lost.

Eye Rays (Su) Each of a corrupt hive mother's ten small eyes can produce a magical ray once per round as a free action. A corrupted hive mother can rotate and adjust its position with much greater speed and skill than normal beholders, and can aim up to six eye rays at targets in any given 90-degree arc.

Each eye's effect resembles a spell (caster level 20th). Each eye ray has a range of 240 feet and a save DC of 30. The save DCs are Charisma-based and include a +4 profane bonus.

The ten eye rays include:

Charm Monster: As the *charm monster* spell, Will negates.

Charm Person: As the *charm person* spell, Will negates.

Disintegrate: As the *disintegrate* spell, Fortitude partial.

Fear: As the *fear* spell, Will partial.

Finger of Death: As the *finger of death* spell, Fortitude partial.

Flesh to Stone: As the *flesh to stone* spell, Fortitude negates.

Inflct Critical Wounds: As the *inflct critical wounds* spell dealing 4d8+20 points of damage, Will half.

Sleep: As the *sleep* spell, except it affects one creature with any number of Hit Dice, Will negates.

Slow: As the *slow* spell, one creature, Will negates.

Telekinesis: A corrupt hive mother can move objects or creature that weigh up to 375 pounds as though with a *telekinesis* spell, Will negates.

All-Around Vision (Ex) A corrupted hive mother is immune to flanking and gains a +4 racial bonus on Search and Spot checks (included).

Flight (Ex) A corrupted hive mother's body is naturally buoyant, enabling it to fly at a speed of 20 feet. This buoyancy also grants it a permanent *feather fall* effect (as the spell) with personal range.

2 CORRUPTED BEHOLDERS

CR 16

BV 186, MM 25

hp 115 each (11 HD); fast healing 5; DR 5/good and silver

CE Large aberration

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +21

Languages Beholder, Common

AC 29, touch 10, flat-footed 28
(-1 size, +1 Dex, +19 natural)

Immune acid, flanking

Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +10

Speed 5 ft. (1 square), fly 20 ft. (good); Flyby Attack

Melee bite +9 (2d6+3 plus 5 vile)

Ranged eye rays +8 touch

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; Grp +14

Atk Options disruptive attack

Special Actions antimagic cone, eye rays

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 13

SQ all-around vision, flight

Feats Alertness^B, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Listen +17, Search +21, Spot +21, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks)

Disruptive Attack (Su) A corrupted beholder deals an additional 5 points of vile damage on a successful bite attack. Vile damage can be healed only by magic cast within the area of a *consecrate* or *hallow* spell.

Antimagic Cone (Su) A corrupted beholder's central eye continually produces a 150-foot cone of antimagic. This functions just like an *antimagic field* (caster level 13th). All magical and supernatural powers and effects within the cone are suppressed—even the corrupted beholder's own eye rays. Once each round, during its turn, the corrupted beholder decides whether the antimagic cone is active or not.

Eye Rays (Su) Each of a corrupt beholder's ten small eyes can produce a magical ray once per round as a free action. Corrupted beholders can rotate and adjust their position allowing them to aim up to three eye rays at targets in any given 90-degree arc.

Each eye's effect resembles a spell (caster level 14th). Each eye ray has a range of 150 feet and a save DC of 20. The save DCs are Charisma-based and include a +4 profane bonus.

The ten eye rays include:

Charm Monster: As the *charm monster* spell, Will negates.

Charm Person: As the *charm person* spell, Will negates.

Disintegrate: As the *disintegrate* spell, Fortitude partial.

BEHOLDER FEATS

The corrupted hive mother has several feats from *Lords of Madness*. These feats are summarized here for your convenience.

Disjunction Ray: As a standard action, the hive mother can reduce the cone-shaped area of her central eye's antimagic cone down to a razor-thin eye ray (+14 ranged touch). If the ray hits a magical effect or item, it disjoins the effect as if she had cast *Mordenkainen's disjunction*.

Focused Antimagic: The hive mother can reduce the cone-shaped area of her central eye to affect a single creature or object (+14 ranged touch). The target must be within 240 feet.

Fear: As the *fear* spell, Will partial.

Finger of Death: As the *finger of death* spell, Fortitude partial.

Flesh to Stone: As the *flesh to stone* spell, Fortitude negates.

Infllict Critical Wounds: As the *inflict critical wounds* spell dealing 2d8+10 points of damage, Will half.

Sleep: As the *sleep* spell, except it affects one creature with any number of Hit Dice, Will negates.

Slow: As the *slow* spell, one creature, Will negates.

Telekinesis: A corrupt hive mother can move objects or creature that weigh up to 325 pounds as though with a *telekinesis* spell, Will negates.

All-Around Vision (Ex) A corrupted beholder is immune to flanking and gains a +4 racial bonus on Search and Spot checks (included).

Flight (Ex) A corrupted beholder's body is naturally buoyant, enabling it to fly at a speed of 20 feet. This buoyancy also grants it a permanent *feather fall* effect (as the spell) with personal range.

TACTICS

The corrupted hive mother uses Disjunction Ray each round as a standard action and fires six rays at PCs coming from the portals, favoring *slow*, *finger of death*, *disintegrate*, *flesh to stone*, *telekinesis* (to throw them off the ledge), and *inflict critical wounds*. Her lesser kin use a similar selection of rays, supporting the hive mother's attacks. Starting on the third round, the hive mother closes to bite and swallow solitary PCs, using her rays to force her target's allies to keep their distance. The beholders fight to the death and may pursue the PCs if they flee this chamber.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Foul Ice: Spaces containing foul ice are extremely slippery. Characters running or charging through these spaces must succeed on a DC 15 Balance check per square.



Failure by 4 or less indicates the character cannot run or charge, and failure by 5 or more means the character falls prone and slides back down the waterfall to plummet 70 feet to area 10. A prone character can catch himself by succeeding on a DC 20 Climb check.

Beholder Pits: The beholders carved out 10-foot wide pits in which to hide from the hive mother's wrath. A beholder that partly emerges may use its eyestalks but not its central eye. Beholders attacking in this way gain a +4 cover bonus to AC and a +2 cover bonus on Reflex saves. A beholder pit is 70 feet deep. A character that falls takes 6d6 points of damage and may climb out with a DC 25 Climb check.

Statues: The PCs aren't the first ones to attack the beholders. A statue has AC 3, hardness 8, and 900 hit points. A DC 15 Climb check is sufficient to climb the statue. Characters standing behind a statue gain cover (+4 AC and +2 on Reflex saves).

CHAMBER OF DELIGHTS

Encounter Level 19

SETUP

Allow the PCs to place their miniatures at the end of the corridor on the opposite side of the door. Agony is currently inside the floor and only emerges when someone or something steps onto the carpet. When the PCs enter this room, read:

Upon taking in this grisly scene, you spy a shape emerging from the floor, a wispy being consisting of a skull perched atop a fluttering knot of ethereal robes. It howls with rage and horror, drifting toward you, eyes blazing with hatred.

AGONY

MM3 33
hp 187 (25 HD)

CR 19

Advanced deathshrieker
CE Medium undead (incorporeal)
Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +22, Spot +17
Aura despair (DC 27)
Languages Common, Sylvan

AC 31, touch 31, flat-footed 23; Dodge (+8 Dex, +5 deflection, +8 profane)

Immune undead immunities

Resist +4 turn resistance

Fort +10, **Ref** +18, **Will** +18

Weakness silence vulnerability

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +20/+15/+10 (1d4 Cha drain)

Base Atk +12; **Grp** —

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Charisma drain

Special Actions death rattle, scream of the dying

Abilities Str —, Dex 27, Con —, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 20

SQ death's grace, undead traits

Feats Ability Focus (scream of the dying), Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Hide +23, Intimidate +22, Listen +22, Search +20, Spot +17, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks)

Despair (Su) A creature that sees Agony must succeed on a DC 27 Will save or become paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save succeeds, the creature cannot again be affected by Agony's despair ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Silence Vulnerability (Ex) To enter into the radius of

a *silence* spell, Agony must first succeed on a Will save (DC 12 + caster level). Agony takes 1d10 points of damage (Will save against the same DC for half) each round it remains in the area of a *silence* spell.

Charisma Drain (Su) Creatures struck by Agony must succeed on a DC 27 Fortitude save or permanently lose 1d4 points of Charisma (2d4 points on a critical hit). Agony heals 5 points of damage (10 on a critical hit) whenever it drains Charisma, gaining any in excess as temporary hit points. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Death Rattle (Su) When Agony is reduced to 0 hit points, it releases a final, devastating shriek. All living creatures within a 300-foot spread must succeed on a DC 27 Will save or gain 1d4 negative levels. Creatures that cannot hear or are under the effects of a *silence* spell gain a +4 bonus on the save to resist this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Scream of the Dying (Su) Once per day, as a full-round action, Agony can release a soul-numbing scream that lasts for up to 3 rounds. After this first round, Agony can use a standard action to sustain the scream. This attack affects all living creatures within a 30-foot spread centered on it, or within a 60-foot cone extending from Agony at its option. Once it chooses the shape of this effect, it must maintain that shape for all 3 rounds. In the case of a cone, it can aim in a single direction during its turn. Creatures caught in the area must succeed on a DC 29 Will save or suffer the effects described below. The save DC is Charisma-based. Creatures that can't hear or are under the effect of a *silence* spell gain a +4 bonus on their saves. The effects are cumulative and concurrent:

Round 1: The creature is deafened for 1d4 rounds.

Round 2: The creature is stunned for 1d3 rounds.

Round 3: The creature suffers the effects of *insanity*, caster level 18th.

The effects are so loud that normal conversation is impossible. Spellcasters who attempt to cast spells with a verbal component must make a DC 29 Concentration check or the spell fails.

Death's Grace (Ex) Agony gains a +8 profane bonus to AC (included).

TACTICS

Agony uses its scream of the dying after rising from the floor. It maintains the scream each round, moving closer to the PCs to blanket them with this destructive ability. If pressed, Agony lashes out with its touch attack, diving into the walls and floor to evade the attacks of its enemies.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Altar: The fleshy altar emits a *desecration* effect out to the edges of the carpet. So long as Agony is in the area of the effect, it gains a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws.



DEMONIC SENTINELS

Encounter Level 20

SETUP

The klurichir demons are positioned as indicated on the map. Unless the PCs have some ability to perceive invisible creatures, don't place the demons on the map. Have the players position themselves in the bottom left corner. When this is done, read:

Four alcoves grant access to a larger chamber beyond. A few depressions in the floor hold some foul fluid that bubbles and burps as you watch. In the far corner, blood and gore paint the walls.

If any character can perceive invisible creatures or negates the *greater invisibility* spells, read:

A demonic figure stands some 30-feet tall and possesses a powerful and muscular body. Massive crimson wings flare out from its back while four powerful arms twitch and claw at the air. Its head is monstrous and snarling, while a second mouth flanked by grotesque pincer snaps out from its prodigious gut.

3 KLURICHIRS

CR 17

FF 48

hp 210 each (20 HD); DR 20/cold iron and good

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, tanar'ri)
Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., see invisibility; Listen +26, Spot +26

Aura fear (30 ft., DC 26)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Celestial, Draconic, Ignan, Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 42, touch 14, flat-footed 40
(-2 size, +2 Dex, +4 *mage armor*, +4 deflection [*unholy aura*], +24 natural)

Immune electricity, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; SR 36

Fort +18, Ref +14, Will +15; +4 *unholy aura*

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 90 ft. (poor)

Melee +3 *battleaxe* +30/+25/+20/+15 (3d6+12/19-20) and 2 pincers +28 each (2d6+4/19-20)

Ranged spines +20 (2d4+4 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Base Atk +20; Grp +37

Atk Options improved grab, poison, rend 2d6+13, vorpal pincers

Special Actions summon tanar'ri

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th):

5th (4/day)—*hold monster* (DC 21)

4th (6/day)—*dimensional anchor* (+20 ranged touch), *greater invisibility*

3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *protection from energy*

2nd (8/day)—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray* (+20 ranged touch)

1st (8/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *mage armor*†, *ray of enfeeblement* (+20 ranged touch), *true strike*

0 (6/day)—*arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (+27 melee touch, DC 16)

†Already cast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*blasphemy* (DC 23), *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *dispel good* (DC 21), *fear* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. objects only), *magic circle against good*, *mass charm monster* (DC 24), *mass suggestion* (DC 22), *pyrotechnics* (DC 18), *read magic*, *symbol of pain* (DC 21), *telekinesis* (+26 attack, DC 21), *tongues*, *unhallow*, *unholy aura* (DC 24), *unholy blight* (DC 20), *wall of fire*

3/day—*destruction* (DC 23), *enervation* (+20 ranged touch), *fire storm* (DC 24), *implosion* (DC 25), *slay living* (+27 melee touch, DC 21)

†Already cast

Abilities Str 29, Dex 15, Con 22, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 23

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Improved Critical (pincers), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack

Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +29, Diplomacy +33, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Hide +17, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (religion) +28, Knowledge (the planes) +28, Listen +26, Move Silently +25, Search +28, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +28, Spot +26, Survival +3 (+5 on other planes, +5 following tracks)

Possessions +3 *battleaxe*, spell component pouch

See Invisibility (Su) As the *see invisibility* spell, always active (CL 20th). This ability works as the spell except its range extends out to the limits of the klurichir's vision.

Aura of Fear (Su) At the beginning of each of a klurichir's turns, all creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 26 Will save or become panicked for 10 rounds. A successful save indicates the creature is instead shaken for 1 round, but cannot be affected by the same klurichir's aura of fear ability for 24 hours.

Improved Grab (Ex) If a klurichir hits a Large or smaller creature with its pincer attack, it may attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it

establishes a hold and draws the victim to its mouth, where it can immediately attempt to attack the opponent with its vorpal pincers. It may use this ability or its rend ability, but not both in the same round.

Poison (Ex) Injury—spine, Fort DC 26, initial and secondary damage 2d4 Strength.

Rend (Ex) If a klurichir hits a single target with both pincers, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh, dealing 2d6+13 points of damage. It may use its rend ability or its improved grab ability, but not both in the same round.

Vorpal Pincers (Ex) A klurichir can make a vorpal pincers attack against a grappled opponent in its pincer, once each round, as a free action. The pincers have an attack bonus of +25 and deal 2d6+13 points of damage with a successful attack. The pincers threaten a critical hit on a 19–20. On a confirmed critical hit, the pincers sever the opponent's head from its body. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to the vorpal effect of this attack.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp) Automatically summon 4d10 quasits, 1d6 hezrous, 2 nalfeshnees, or 2 glabrezus, 1/day. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

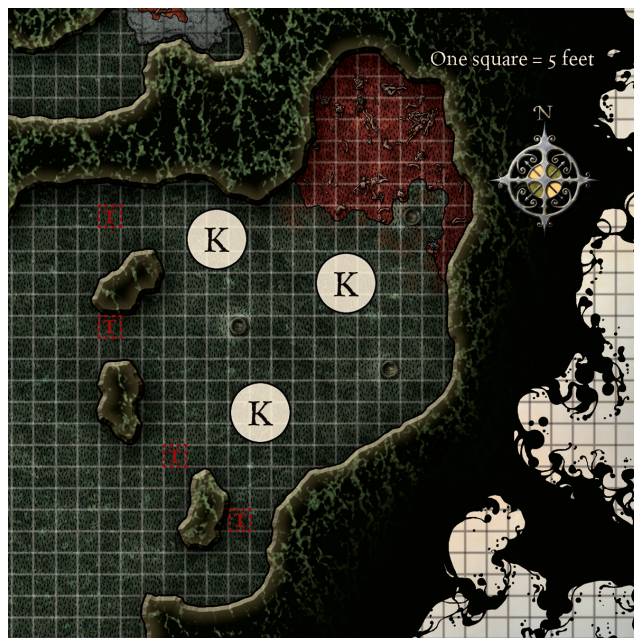
TACTICS

Before the combat begins, the demons have cast *greater invisibility* and *mage armor*. Once the PCs close, the demons cast *unholy aura* (included in their statistics above). The demons are eager to engage the PCs in melee, but are clever enough to soften them up first. So, over the course of the first 3 rounds, the demons take turns casting *destruction*, *enervation*, and *implosion* until they've all used these abilities each one time, reserving *implosion* for last so they can concentrate on the spell to target each character in turn. The demons gladly keep casting spells until the characters close. Should these spells fail to affect the PCs, the demons mix up their spellcasting to target characters with *hold monster*, *fire storm*, and *scorching ray*.

Characters that approach within 30 feet of the demons must save against the aura of fear ability. If any characters flee, one klurichir follows, chasing the character or characters so it can butcher them alone.

While the demons possess a terrifying array of spells and spell-like abilities, they truly shine in melee. The first round the demons fight in melee, they modify their attacks with a 10-point Power Attack. Following their battleaxe attack, they also get an attack with their vorpal pincers to grapple the character. Once grappling, a klurichir keeps focusing its attacks on its grappled victim until the character escapes or is killed.

The demons do not let the PCs escape easily. They chase them if they try to flee—even out of the elder evil itself, such is their hunger for fresh meat. The situation



only worsens if the PCs have diminished the elder evil's sign. The demons summon two glabrezus each and send them after the characters to cut off their retreat.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Symbols of Pain: Each entrance to this room is protected by a *symbol of pain* (caster level 20th). Any creature passing over the symbol triggers them, forcing that creature and all creatures within a 60-foot radius to succeed on a DC 21 Will save or take a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks. The demons must also make this save if the symbols get past their spell resistance. The penalty applies for 1 hour after the characters leave the area. There is no additional effect for failed saves against multiple *symbols of pain*.

Pockmarks: The floor is dimpled with foul pockmarks that contain the elder evil's ichors. Any creature that enters a space containing the fluid must succeed on a DC 33 Fortitude save or be reduced to a spongy mass of flesh. This effect functions like the essence of Shothragot's corporeal instability ability (see page 46 for details).

Blood and Gore: The far corner of this room witnessed the death of another adventuring party who came to destroy the elder evil. The demons captured and slowly tore them to pieces here, tossing their equipment on top of the torn flesh and splattered organs. The items not destroyed by the demons include a suit of *banded mail of luck*, +2 *acidic burst short sword*, *ring of major cold resistance*, *ring of protection* +3, *lesser metamagic rod of Maximize*, *cloak of resistance* +5, *druid's vestments*, *eternal wand of cure serious wounds*^{MIC}, *dark blue rhomboid ioun stone*, and a *vest of free movement*^{MIC}.

KEEPERS OF THE EYE

Encounter Level 20

SETUP

Place the deathdrinker demons where indicated on the tactical map. The players may place their miniatures anywhere within the first three squares of the right side of the map. Once the players have placed, read:

Glistening pools of bright green fluid illuminate this chamber and reveal two 30-foot-tall, red-skinned guards dressed in sinister breastplates and wielding massive longswords. Branching out from either side of their heads are broken and splintered antlers. Carved into their foreheads between their white eyes are symbols reminiscent of inverted black pyramids.

2 DEATHDRINKERS

CR 18

MM4 40

hp 337 each (27 HD); DR 15/good and lawful

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +6; Senses true seeing; Listen +30, Spot +30

Aura unlife (10 ft.)

Languages Abyssal, Common

AC 35, touch 10, flat-footed 33

(-2 size, +2 Dex, +7 armor, +18 natural)

Immune negative energy, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 29

Fort +23, Ref +17, Will +17

Speed 35 ft. in breastplate (7 squares), base speed 50 ft.

Melee +3 *adamantine longsword* +38/+33/+28/+23 (3d6+18/17-20 plus 1d6 fire plus 1d6 fire 1 round later)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Base Atk +27; Grp +45

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater teleport*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater dispel magic*), aligned strike (chaotic, evil), glory in slaughter

Combat Gear *oil of align weapon*, *oil of bless weapon*, *oil of corrupt weapon*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*air walk* (self only), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only)
3/day—quicken *greater dispel magic*, quicken *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only)

Abilities Str 30, Dex 14, Con 27, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11

SA aura of unlife, aligned strike (chaotic, evil), glory in slaughter

SQ deathdrinker

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater dispel magic*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater teleport*)

Skills Concentration +38, Hide +21, Intimidate +30, Jump +37, Knowledge (the planes) +30, Listen +30, Move Silently +29, Spot +30, Survival +0 (+2 on other planes)

Possessions combat gear plus +2 *breastplate*, +3 *adamantine longsword* with a *greater crystal of fire assault*, 7,000 gp in assorted gems and jewelry.

True Seeing (Su) As the *true seeing* spell, continuous, caster level 20th.

Aura of Unlife (Su) At the end of each of the deathdrinker's turns, creatures within 10 feet take 2d6 points of damage. This is a negative energy effect. Undead are instead healed of a like amount of damage.

Glory in Slaughter (Ex) A deathdrinker gains a +5 morale bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws for 1 minute after it kills an opponent with 10 or more Hit Dice.

Deathdrink (Su) If a deathdrinker deals enough damage to a creature to kill it with either its aura of unlife or melee attack, it instantly heals 1d8 points of damage per HD of the creature it killed.

TACTICS

The deathdrinkers apply *oil of corrupt weapon* to their weapons and then charge on the next round to attack anyone they deem to be an intruder, using an 8-point Power Attack. The deathdrinkers are inherently selfish and they do not use team tactics. Instead, each one focuses on a separate opponent until they kill their victim, which activates their glory in slaughter ability. Note that characters within 10 feet of the deathdrinkers take 2d6 points of damage each round.

DEVELOPMENT

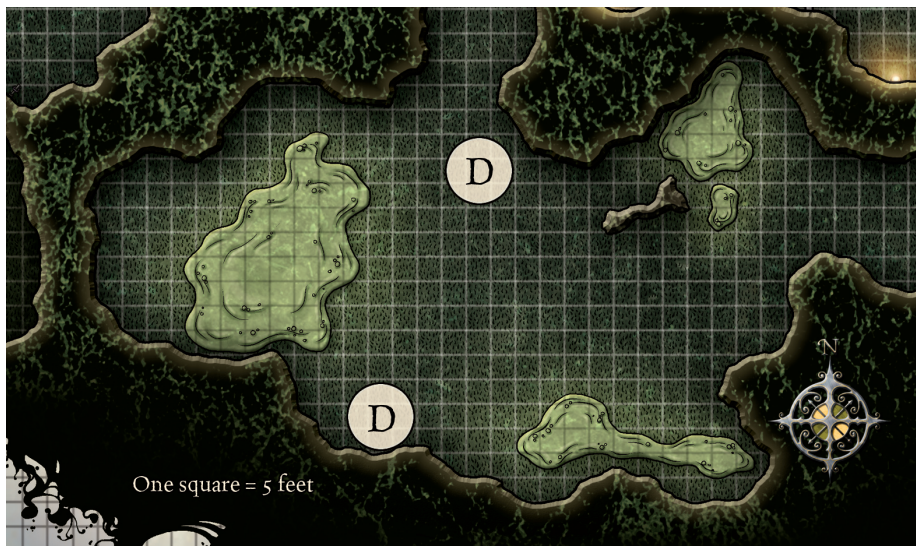
Sounds of combat from this room may alert nearby creatures. Have the templars of Tharizdun in area 21 make Listen checks each round the combat continues (being sure to account for distance and the presence of the door). Similarly, the aspect of Obox-Ob in area 18 is also entitled to a Listen check. If either the aspect or the templars hear the combat, they do not join the fight, but ready actions as noted in their respective entries

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Acid Pools: Spread out in places throughout this large room are pools of caustic fluid. Any character standing in an adjacent space to an acid pool must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1 round.

The pools are each as deep as they are wide. Coming into contact with a pool deals 2d6 points of acid damage. Any creature unfortunate enough to be immersed takes 20d6 points of acid damage per round of immersion. Damage from the acid continues for 1d3 rounds after exposure, but the damage is only half that dealt during actual contact (1d6 or 10d6 per round). Immunity to acid damage prevents creatures from taking damage from the pools, but such creatures are still at risk of drowning.



THE EMISSARY

Encounter Level 22

SETUP

Place the aspect of Obox-Ob where indicated on the tactical map. The players may place their miniatures anywhere near the entrance. When the PCs see the aspect of Obox-Ob, read:

A nightmare of spider limbs fused into the form of a vile demon surges out of the darkness, cackling aloud and in your minds to create an unbearable chorus of madness. The form defies description and threatens to blast your sanity away, leaving you a shuddering, gibbering shell.

ASPECT OF OBOX-OB

CR 22

FC1 71

hp 455 (26 HD); fast healing 15; DR 20/cold iron and good

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, obyrith)
Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Listen +36, Spot +36

Aura discordant drone (40 ft. radius, Will DC 31), form of madness (120-ft. radius, Will DC 31)

Languages Abyssal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 41, touch 11, flat-footed 38
(–2 size, +3 Dex, +30 natural)

Immune disease, mind-affecting effects, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; SR 33

Fort +28, Ref +18, Will +22; +4 against Dark Speech

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); Flyby Attack

Melee 3 stings +36 (3d6+12/19–20 plus poison) and bite +34 (2d6+6) and tongue +34 (1d8+6 plus implant chaos)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Base Atk +26; Grp +46

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, aligned strike (chaotic, evil), epic strike, implant chaos, poison

Special Actions Dark Speech

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*astral projection*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport*, *giant vermin*, *telekinesis* (DC 23), *summon swarm*, *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 22)

3/day—*quicken* *giant vermin*, *quicken* *telekinesis* (DC 23), *symbol of insanity* (DC 25)

1/day—*polymorph any object* (DC 26, vermin shapes only)

Abilities Str 34, Dex 17, Con 36, Int 23, Wis 24, Cha 27

Feats Cleave, Dark Speech (see sidebar), Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (sting), Improved Initiative, Multi-attack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*giant vermin*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*telekinesis*)

Skills Balance +7, Climb +41, Concentration +42, Diplomacy +10, Hide +24, Intimidate +37, Jump +43, Knowledge (arcana) +35, Knowledge (religion) +35, Knowledge (the planes) +35, Listen +36, Move Silently +32, Sense Motive +36, Spellcraft +37, Spot +36, Survival +7 (+11 on other planes), Tumble +34

True Seeing (Su) As the *true seeing* spell, continuous, caster level 20th.

Discordant Drone (Su) Whenever the aspect of Obox-Ob moves at least 5 feet, he emits a cacophony of shrieking and wailing. All creatures within 40 feet must succeed on a DC 31 Will save or be deafened and confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Form of Madness (Su) Any creature within 120 feet that observes the aspect of Obox-Ob must succeed on a DC 31 Will save or have its mind forever after haunted by Obox-Ob's unholy shape. Henceforth, each time the affected creature tries to rest, it is subject to the effect of a *nightmare* spell (no save; CL 20th). As well, the creature automatically becomes shaken whenever he is within 30 feet of a vermin creature he can see. This form of madness is permanent. A *heal* or *greater restoration* spell can cure the effects if the caster succeeds on a DC 30 caster level check. A *miracle* or *wish* spell automatically removes the effect.

A creature that makes this save is immune to the aspect's form of madness for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting effect. Chaotic evil outsiders are immune to this ability. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex) Sting—Injury, Fortitude DC 36, 2d8 Int drain/2d8 Int drain. A creature drained to 0 Intelligence by Obox-Ob's sting is immediately transformed into a fiendish monstrous scorpion of the same size as its previous form. The victim retains none of its previous abilities or memories. Only a *miracle* or *wish* restores the victim to its original form and raises its Intelligence to 1. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Implant Chaos (Su) A creature that takes damage from Obox-Ob's tongue attack must succeed on a DC 31 Fortitude save or become implanted with the raw stuff of chaos. The victim gains 1d4 negative levels and 1d4 additional negative levels each round at the start of the victim's turn as the chaos transforms

its body and soul. Once the victim has a number of negative levels equal to its Hit Dice, the chaos consumes it utterly, leaving behind only the victim's gear. A creature destroyed in this way can only be brought back to life with a *miracle*, *true resurrection*, or *wish* spell, and even then the caster must succeed on a DC 30 caster level check or the implanted chaos immediately begins to destroy the victim again as it is restored to life. *Dispel chaos* halts the deterioration caused by the implantation but does not remove negative levels.

DARK SPEECH

The aspect of Obox-Ob has the Dark Speech feat, which is fully described in *Fiendish Codex I*. For your convenience, its salient functions are included here.

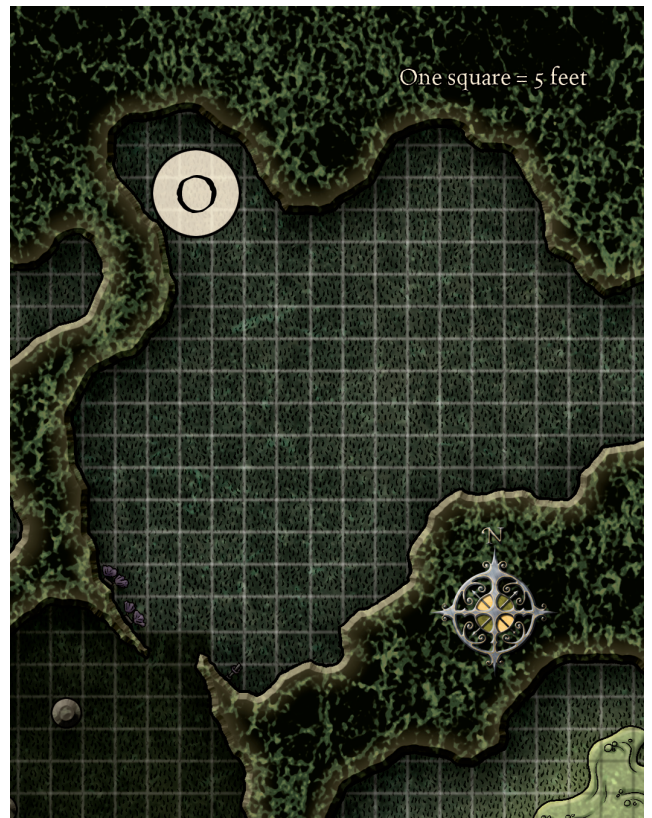
Benefit: Dark Speech has four basic uses, three of which pertain to this encounter.

Dread: Using Dark Speech in this way deals 1d4 points of Charisma damage and every creature in a 30-foot radius must succeed on a DC 31 Will save or suffer the effects of the speech as shown on the following table.

Level (Alignment)	Result
1st–4th (non-evil)	Listener is shaken for 1d10 rounds and must flee until speaker is out of sight.
1st–4th (evil)	Listener cowers for 1d10 rounds.
5th–10th (non-evil)	Listener is shaken for 1d10 rounds.
5th–10th (evil)	Listener is charmed (as <i>charm monster</i>) for 1d10 rounds.
11th+	Listener is filled with loathing, but not affected.
11th+	Listener is impressed, speaker gains +2 competence bonus on attempts to change listener's attitude in the future.

Corruption: As a full-round action, the aspect of Obox-Ob can whisper vile words at an inanimate object and reduce its hardness by half. The aspect can affect an object just once.

Dark Unity: The aspect of Obox-Ob can use Dark Speech to establish a hive mind in any swarm of vermin or animals with an Intelligence score of 2 or lower. Thereafter, the aspect can give the swarm one command as per the *suggestion* spell (caster level 26th). Infusing a swarm in this manner deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage to the aspect.



TACTICS

Once committed to combat, Obox-Ob does not grant quarter. He moves at least 5 feet each round to create his discordant drone and positions himself in full view of as many PCs as possible. He trains his attacks on PCs that try to get past him, using quickened *telekinesis* to toss back ambitious characters toward the entrance.

Obox-Ob's true power lays within his melee attacks. The first chance he gets, he makes a full attack action, holding back his Power Attack until he has infected his victim with poison and implanted chaos. As the poison and steady supply of negative levels neutralize his opponent, he swings toward another target.

TEMPLARS OF THARIZDUN

Encounter Level 23

SETUP

Lareth, an infamous cleric of the Dark God who has escaped death on numerous occasions, positioned his personal guard—the deathdrinkers—at area 17 to dissuade intruders from venturing close to the last cultists' redoubt. If Lareth or his cronies hear the sounds of battle with the demons or the aspect of Obox-Ob, Lareth readies a *fire storm* (cold) spell to cast on the first people through the door, while Azugel readies a charge. Vadaeth withdraws into his chambers and emerges only if he hears fighting here.

The placement of the figures assumes the inhabitants are aware of the PCs. If not, place Azugel and Lareth both in the side rooms. When the PCs enter this room, read:

Beyond the door, a vast sea of green slime bubbles before you. On either side, you see a few flickering torches, each giving off a pale blue flame. Iron walls set in the strange substance of the walls give the chamber the appearance of having rooms.

Charging you is a frothing half-orc wearing a breastplate and wielding a greatsword. At the opposite side of the room, you see a tall blonde man with purple robes. One side of his face is extraordinarily attractive, while the other is a gruesome mass of scars.

Behind the man, you see a massive altar. On it rests an inverted two-step pyramid.

When Vadaeth emerges, read:

A hulking humanoid, larger than a man but smaller than an ogre, lumbers forward. Encased in enameled black full plate and armed with an impossibly large greataxe, he howls "Tharizdun!" as he charges forward.

FRENZIED RAGING AZUGEL

CR 20

CW 34

hp 255 (20 HD); DR 2/—

Male half-orc barbarian 10/frenzied berserker 10^{CW}

CE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +14, Spot +1

Languages Common, Orc

AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 23; improved uncanny dodge

(+3 Dex, +10 armor, +3 deflection, +3 natural, -4 frenzy, -2 rage)

Fort +25, Ref +14, Will +14

Speed 30 ft. in breastplate (6 squares), base speed 40 ft.
Melee +3 keen unholy greatsword +39/+34/+29/+24
(2d6+27/17-20 plus 2d6 against good)

Base Atk +20; Grp +36

Atk Options Cleave, Defensive Sweep, Destructive Rage, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Intimidating Rage, Power Attack, deathless frenzy, frenzy 5/day, greater frenzy, improved power attack, rage 3/day, supreme cleave, supreme power attack

Special Actions inspire frenzy 3/day

Combat Gear 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of resist fire 30, potion of shield of faith +4

Abilities Str 42, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ tireless frenzy

Feats Cleave, Defensive Sweep^{PH2}, Destructive Rage^{CW}, Diehard^B, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Intimidating Rage^{CW}, Power Attack

Skills Intimidate +21, Jump +31, Listen +14

Possessions combat gear plus +5 breastplate of speed^{MIC}, +3 keen unholy greatsword, ring of protection +3, amulet of natural armor +3, belt of giant Strength +6, gloves of Dexterity +2, vest of resistance +5^{MIC}

Deathless Frenzy (Ex) While Azugel is in a frenzy, he is not considered disabled at 0 hit points, nor is he treated as dying at -1 to -9 hit points. Even if reduced to -10 hit points or less, he continues to fight normally until his frenzy ends. At that point, the effects of his wounds apply normally. This ability does not prevent death from massive damage or from spell effects such as *slay living* or *disintegrate*.

Frenzied Rage (Ex) If Azugel takes damage and still has uses of greater frenzy remaining for the day, he goes into a greater frenzy as a free action during his next turn unless he succeeds on a Will save (DC 10 + points of damage). Azugel's frenzy lasts for 9 rounds if raging. While in a frenzy, he must attack foes, or a random creature if no foes remain. Each round of the frenzy, Azugel takes 2 points of nonlethal damage. He may end a rage prematurely with a successful DC 20 Will save. Otherwise, this ability functions as a barbarian's rage. When not in a frenzied rage, Azugel uses the following statistics.

AC 29, touch 16, flat-footed 29

hp decrease by 40

Fort +23, Ref +14, Will +12

Melee +3 keen unholy greatsword +31/+26/+21/+16
(2d6+15/17-20 plus 2d6 against good)

Abilities Str 28

Skills Jump +24

Supreme Cleave (Ex) Azugel can take a 5-foot step between attacks when using the Cleave or Great Cleave

feat. He is still limited to one adjustment per round.

Supreme Power Attack (Ex) Azugel gains a +4 bonus on melee damage rolls for every –1 penalty he takes on the attack roll when using the Power Attack feat.

Inspire Frenzy (Ex) While frenzied, Azugel can inspire frenzy in all willing allies within 10 feet. Affected allies gain a +6 bonus to Strength, an extra attack when making a full-attack action, –4 penalty on AC, and take 2 points of nonlethal damage each round. The frenzy lasts for 3 rounds plus a number of rounds equal to the creature's Constitution modifier. The creature can prematurely end the frenzy by succeeding on a DC 20 Will save.

LARETH THE BEAUTIFUL
hp 133 (20 HD)

CR 20

Male human cleric 15/hierophant 5
CE Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Abyssal, Common

AC 31, touch 12, flat-footed 30
(+1 Dex, +13 armor, +6 shield, +1 deflection)

Miss Chance 20% blur

Fort +20, **Ref** +14, **Will** +26

Speed 20 ft. in full plate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft.
Melee +3 profane morningstar +16/+11/+6 (1d8+3 plus 1d6 against living or 2d6 against good outsiders)

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Sudden Maximize, divine reach 60 ft., reroll any damage 1/day

Special Actions Divine Metamagic (Transdimensional Spell), Embody Energy (cold), blast infidel (lawful good), rebuke undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+18, 15th)

Combat Gear circlet of rapid casting^{MIC}

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 20th):

9th—*Bigby's crushing hand* (grp +44, PH 203), *energy drain* (+14 ranged touch), *miracle*, *rapid summon monster VIII*, *summon monster IX*

8th—*fire storm* (cold) (DC 26) (3), *mass cure critical wounds*, *unholy aura* (DC 27, CL 21st)^D

7th—*blasphemy* (DC 26, CL 21st), *destruction* (DC 25), *ethereal jaunt*, *forcecage*^D, *regenerate*, *repulsion* (DC 25)

6th—*greater dispel magic*, *heal* (2), *mass bull's strength*, *repulsion* (DC 24)^D, *word of recall*

5th—*dispel good* (DC 24, CL 21st)^D, *flame strike* (cold) (DC 23) (2), *righteous might*, *slay living* (DC 23), *spell resistance*, *true seeing*

4th—*air walk*, *cure critical wounds* (2), *dimensional anchor* (+14 ranged touch), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *poison* (+14 ranged touch, DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 23, CL 21st)^D

3rd—*bestow curse* (+13 melee touch, DC 21), *blast of force* (+14 ranged touch, DC 21)^{D, SC}, *blindness/deafness* (DC 21), *cure serious wounds* (2), *dispel magic* (2), *wind wall*

2nd—*aid*, *align weapon*, *bear's endurance*, *cure mod-*

erate wounds, *death knell* (DC 21, CL 21st), *hold person* (DC 20), *magic missile*^D, *resist energy* 1st—*command* (DC 19), *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 19), *entropic shield*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from good* (CL 21st)^D, *sanctuary* (DC 19), *shield of faith* 0—*detect magic* (2), *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*, *resistance*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Tharizdun. Domains: Evil, Force^{SC}

Abilities Str 10, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 26, Cha 16
SQ overwhelming aura of chaos and evil

Feats Divine Metamagic (Transdimensional Spell)^{CD}, Embody Energy (cold)^{ELE}, Energy Substitution (fire)^{CAR}, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Rapid Spell^{CD, B}, Spell Focus (conjunction), Spell Focus (evil)^{CD}, Sudden Maximize^{CAR, B}, Transdimensional Spell^{CD, B}

Skills Concentration +21, Diplomacy +21, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +24, Spellcraft +26

Possessions combat gear plus +5 *full plate of light fortification*, +4 *animated greater blurring*^{MIC} *heavy steel shield*, +3 *profane*^{MIC} *morningstar*, *ring of protection* +1, *cloak of Charisma* +2, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *peripart of Wisdom* +6, *vest of resistance* +5^{MIC}, cold iron unholy symbol of Tharizdun, reliquary for *unholy aura* (500 gp), *true seeing ointment* (250 gp), *ruby dust* (1,500 gp for *forcecage*)

Blast Infidel (Su) Any spell Lareth casts that involves inflicting or channeling negative energy (*inflict* spells, *harm*, *enervation*) cast on a lawful good creature works as if under the effect of a Maximize Spell feat but without using a higher-level spell slot.

VADAETH BLOODSEEKER

CR 20

hp 183 (17 HD); DR 10/magic

Male half-fiend goliath^{RS} fighter 10/blackguard 7
CE Medium outsider (native)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Aura despair (10 ft.)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Gol-Kaa, Terran

AC 35, touch 16, flat-footed 34; Dodge, Mobility (+1 Dex, +13 armor, +5 shield, +5 deflection, +1 natural)

Immune poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 27

Fort +23, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft. in full plate (4 squares), base speed 30 ft.; Spring Attack

Melee +4 *keen greataxe* +33/+28/+23/+18 (3d6+21/19–20/x3) and

bite +22 (1d8+5) or

Melee 2 claws +27 each (1d6+10) and

bite +22 (1d8+5)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +17; **Grp** +31

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Whirlwind Attack, smite good 1/day (+17 damage), smite good 2/day (+6 attack, +7 damage), sneak attack +2d6

Special Actions rebuke undead 9/day (+8, 2d6+13, 5th)

Blackguard Spells Prepared (CL 7th):

3rd—*cure serious wounds*

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *demonhide*^{SC}

1st—*corrupt weapon*^{DMG}, *divine sacrifice*^{SC}, *resurgence*^{SC}

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th):

3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (+27 melee touch, DC 20), *unholy aura* (DC 24)

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 24), *contagion* (+27 melee touch, DC 20), *desecrate*, *horrid wilting* (DC 24), *summon monster IX* (fiends only), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 20)

Abilities Str 30, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 20

SQ acclimated, fiendish servant (none), mountain movement, poison use, powerful build, strong aura of evil

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise^B, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Sunder^B, Mobility, Power Attack^B, Spring Attack^B, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe)^B, Whirlwind Attack^B

Skills Climb +16, Concentration +12, Hide +10, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (religion) +11, Sense Motive +4, Swim +12

Possessions +5 *full plate*, +3 *animated heavy steel shield*, +4 *keen greataxe*, *ring of protection* +5, *belt of giant's Strength* +6, *cloak of Charisma* +6

Aura of Despair (Su) All enemies within 10 feet take a –2 penalty on all saving throws.

Acclimated (Ex) Vadaeth is automatically acclimated to life at high altitudes and takes no penalty for altitude.

Mountain Movement (Ex) Vadaeth can make standing long jumps and high jumps as if they were running jumps. Vadaeth can engage in accelerated climbing without taking a –5 penalty on the Climb check.

Powerful Build (Ex) Whenever Vadaeth is subject to a size modifier or special size modifier for an opposed check, he is treated as if Large size if doing so would be advantageous. He is also treated as Large size when determining whether a creature's special attacks based on size can affect him. He can use weapons designed for a creature one size larger than he is without penalty.

TACTICS

None of the templars works especially well with the others and each fight independently, looking to kill as many PCs



while preserving their own skins. Of the three, Azugel is the most straightforward. On the first round, he activates his armor, flies into a frenzied rage, and charges the closest character. He attacks the closest PC, using a 20-point Power Attack to deal +80 points of damage. Should he fail to hit his opponent, he drops the Power Attack by 5 each round until he does consistently hit his opponent.

Lareth runs through his direct damage spells first, freely catching Azugel in the area. If the elder evil's sign is diminished, Lareth uses rapid *summon monster VIII* followed by a *summon monster IX* to even the odds. Lareth is reluctant to get into melee, but if it seems unavoidable, he casts *righteous might* and *divine power*.

Vadaeth spends the first round casting *unholy aura* and *demonhide*. When he emerges, he casts *horrid wilting* on an arcane caster and moves to engage in melee.

All three templars fight to the death.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Light: Positioned around the perimeter of this chamber are *everburning torches*, shedding bright light in a 20-foot radius and shadowy light 40-feet further.

Virulent Green Slime (CR 10): The center of this chamber is filled with a pool of nasty green slime. The slime deals 2d6 points of Constitution damage per round after contact. The slime cannot be scraped off and, upon contact, the only way to remove the slime is to deal cold or fire damage to the victim, automatically destroying the stuff. A *remove disease* spell destroys a 5-foot square of virulent green slime. Virulent green slime deals 4d6 points of damage per round to wood or metal and ignores metal's hardness.

ESSENCE OF SHOTHRAGOT

Encounter Level 26

SETUP

The player characters appear on the ledge surrounding the essence's pit. The players may place their miniatures anywhere inside the dotted red box. Place the blackstone gigants where indicated and the elder evil at the bottom of the pit. Neither the constructs nor the elder evil anticipate the PCs' arrival, so the characters automatically gain surprise. When the characters appear, read:

You find yourself in a massive chamber with smooth black stone walls and floor. The ceiling stretches nearly 100 feet overhead. Hovering in each corner of the room are four 66-foot-tall black statues of horrible demons, fusions of snakes and beautiful women. Each wears a necklace of petrified human heads whose faces are contorted as if wailing. The statues, as one, turn their stony heads to face you, faces twisting with anger.

In the center of the chamber is a 60-foot-wide pit, its edges fractured and cracked. Black mist rises from the depths, coiling up like serpents.

ESSENCE OF SHOTHRAGOT

CR 22

hp 420 (20 HD); regeneration 10; DR 15/epic and good

CE Gargantuan outsider (air, chaos, earth, evil, extraplanar, fire, water)

Init +9; Senses blindsight 500 ft., true seeing; Listen +34, Spot +34

Aura madness (120 ft., DC 35), divine madness (100 miles)

Languages telepathy 1,000 ft.

AC 40, touch 22, flat-footed 39

(-4 size, +1 Dex, +15 deflection, +18 natural)

Immune ability damage, ability drain, cold, energy drain, fire, massive damage, mind-affecting effects, petrification, polymorph

Resist acid 20, electricity 20; SR 32

Fort +40, Ref +28, Will +38

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), fly 120 ft.; Spring Attack

Melee 4 tentacles +40 each (2d6+24 plus corporeal instability) and 4 bites +35 each (2d8+12 plus wounding)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 20 ft.

Base Atk +20; Grp +56

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Expertise, Great Cleave,

Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*chain lightning*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*cone of cold*), aligned strike (chaos, evil), constrict 2d6+36, corporeal instability, elemental seepage, epic strike, improved grab, tremendous blow, wounding

Special Actions summon black cyst

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—bolts of bedevilment (+17 ranged touch, DC 30)^{SC}, chain lightning (DC 31), cone of cold (DC 30), control water, control weather, control winds, ice storm, magic missile, stone shape, wall of fire, wall of stone 1/day—acid fog, earthquake (PH 225), fire storm (DC 32), insanity (DC 32), wall of force, whirlwind (DC 33, PH 301)

Abilities Str 58, Dex 13, Con 36, Int 25, Wis 32, Cha 41
SQ anathematic secrecy, force mastery, freedom of movement, nondetection, seals of binding, unholy blessing

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Superior Initiative^{ELH, B}, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*chain lightning*)^B, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*cone of cold*)^B, Spring Attack^B

Skills Balance +34, Bluff +38, Concentration +36, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +15 (+17 acting), Hide +20, Intimidate +40, Jump +38, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (history) +30, Knowledge (religion) +30, Listen +34, Move Silently +24, Sense Motive +34, Spellcraft +32 (+34 deciphering scrolls), Spot +34, Tumble +32, Use Magic Device +38 (+40 scrolls)

True Seeing (Ex) As the *true seeing* spell, always active.

Aura of Madness (Su) At the beginning of each of the essence of Shothragot's turns, all living creatures within 120 feet take 1d6 points of Wisdom drain and are confused for 1 round. A DC 35 negates this effect.

Divine Madness (Su) All extraplanar outsiders with divine ranks that come within 100 miles of Shothragot are affected as if by the *insanity* spell (no save). When rolling to determine their action, any result that would have the afflicted creature attack the caster instead forces the god to attack the closest creature not the elder evil.

Telepathy (Su) The essence of Shothragot can communicate telepathically with any creature that has a language and is within 1,000 feet.

Regeneration (Ex) The essence of Shothragot takes lethal damage from good- and lawful-aligned attacks and spells and effects with the good or lawful descriptor.

Constrict (Ex) The essence of Shothragot deals 2d6+36 points of damage on a successful grapple check, in addition to damage from its tentacle attack.

Corporeal Instability (Su) A blow from the essence of Shothragot's tentacle attack against a living creature can cause a terrible transformation. The creature must succeed on a DC 33 Fortitude save or become a spongy, amorphous mass. Unless the victim manages to control the effect (see below), its shape melts, flows, writhes, and boils.

An affected creature is unable to hold or use any item. Clothing, armor, rings, and helmets become useless. Large items worn or carried—armor, backpacks, even shirts—hamper more than help, reducing the victim's Dexterity score by 4. Soft or misshapen feet and legs reduce speed to 10 feet or one-quarter normal, whichever is less. Searing pain courses along the nerves, so strong that the victim cannot act coherently. The victim cannot cast spells or use magic items, and it attacks blindly, unable to distinguish friend from foe (–4 penalty on attack rolls and a 50% miss chance, regardless of the attack roll).

Each round the victim spends in an amorphous state causes 1 point of Wisdom drain from mental shock. If the victim's Wisdom score falls to 0, it becomes a chaos beast (*MM* 33).

A victim can regain its own shape by taking a standard action to attempt a DC 15 Charisma check. A success reestablishes the creature's normal form for 1 minute. On a failure, the victim can still repeat this check each round until successful.

Corporeal instability is not a disease or a curse and so is hard to remove. A *shapechange* or *stoneskin* spell does not cure an afflicted creature but fixes its form for the duration of the spell. A *restoration*, *heal*, or *greater restoration* spell removes the affliction (a separate *restoration* is necessary to restore any drained points of Wisdom).

Elemental Seepage (Ex) Whenever the essence of Shothragot takes 20 or more points of damage from a single hit, it loses a blast of elemental energy, dealing 1d6 points of acid damage, 1d6 points of cold damage, 1d6 points of electricity damage, and 1d6 points of fire damage to the creature that attacked it. A successful DC 33 Reflex save halves this damage.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the essence of Shothragot must hit an opponent of any size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Tremendous Blow (Ex) As a full-round action, the essence of Shothragot can make a devastating attack with a tentacle against a single opponent. If the attack hits, the target must immediately succeed on a DC 44 Fortitude save or fly straight back a number of 5-foot squares equal to the damage dealt. If the target strikes an object or a creature in its path, it stops and it and the obstacle struck take 12d6+24 points of damage.

Wounding (Ex) Any living creature damaged by the essence of Shothragot continues to bleed. Each time the essence strikes an opponent with its bite attacks, that creature takes 1 point of Constitution damage in addition to any normal damage taken. If the essence strikes an opponent but does not deal damage, the opponent does not take this Constitution damage. Creatures immune to critical hits (such as plants and constructs) are immune to the Constitution damage dealt by this ability.

Summon Black Cyst (Sp) Automatically summon 1 black cyst; 4/day; caster level 20th. The essence's sign does not affect this ability. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

Anathematic Secrecy (Ex) Any divination spell from a divine origin used to ascertain information about Shothragot fails. This ability is always active.

Force Mastery (Ex) An essence of Shothragot is immune to all spells and spell-like effects with the force descriptor. In addition, it may move through any ongoing force effects (such as *wall of force* and *forcecage*) as if they were not there.

Freedom of Movement (Ex) As the *freedom of movement* spell; always active.

Nondetection (Ex) As the *nondetection* spell; always active.

Seals of Binding (Ex) The seals of binding herald the appearance of Shothragot. See Signs of the Apocalypse sidebar for details.

Unholy Blessing (Ex) The essence of Shothragot adds its Charisma modifier as a deflection bonus to Armor Class and as a resistance bonus on all saving throws (included).

Skills The essence of Shothragot gains a +8 racial bonus on Balance, Hide, and Tumble checks.

4 BLACKSTONE GIGANTS

CR 18

FF 21

hp 236 (32 HD); DR 15/adamantine

CE Gargantuan construct

Init –2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +15, Spot +15

Languages Abyssal

AC 31, touch 4, flat-footed 31

(–4 size, –2 Dex, +27 natural)

Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save, no risk of death from massive damage (*MM* 307)

Resist acid 20, cold 20, electricity 20, fire; SR 32

Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +12

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee 4 slams +38 each (4d8+17/19–20 plus petrification)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Base Atk +24; **Grp** +53

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, petrification, trample
8d8+25

Special Actions animate statue

Abilities Str 45, Dex 7, Con —, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ construct traits

Feats Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +30, Listen +15, Spot +15

Petrification (Su) Creatures struck by a blackstone giant's slam attack must succeed on a DC 26 Fortitude save or be turned to stone. This ability functions like *flesh to stone*, caster level 20th.

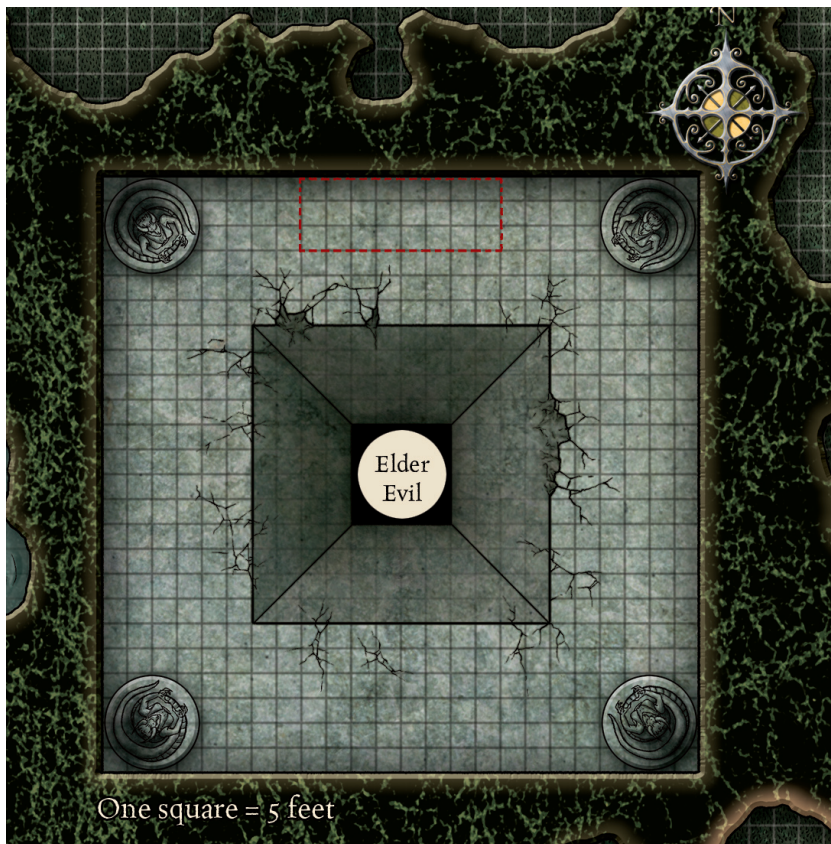
Animate Statue (Su) A blackstone giant can use one or more of its attacks to touch and animate any creatures it turned to stone. This ability functions like an *animate object* spell (CL 20th). The animated stone statue has the statistics of an animated object of its size and composition with hardness 8. Typical petrified creatures have the improved speed ability (+10 feet for two legs or +20 feet for more legs). All animated statues are under the mental control of the blackstone giant or its creator (the essence of Shothragot). Statues remain animated for 20 rounds. A blackstone giant cannot animate a petrified statue more than once.

TACTICS

After the surprise round, the blackstone giants sweep in to bull rush PCs into the pit. Those knocked down fall 60 feet, at which point they provoke an attack of opportunity from Shothragot in addition to taking 5d6 points of falling damage. Characters landing on the essence may ride it as it rises, but it attacks them each round.

Against opponents having success with weapons, the blackstone giants use Improved Sunder to remove these irritants and then hammer the PCs with 10-point Power Attacks. Once a giant drops a foe, it uses its next action to trample a number of PCs on its way to the next target.

The essence ascends from the pit on the second round and stops about 10 feet over the top of it. It uses a quickened *chain lightning* in conjunction with a full attack to grapple and crush its foes. If any opponent



deals 50 or more points of damage to the essence in a single round, it uses its tremendous blow ability to splatter the offending character against the wall.

If the *Gems of Tharizdun* were destroyed, the essence summons a black cyst to replace a blackstone giant whenever they fall.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs destroy the essence of Shothragot, the surviving blackstone giants wail in horror as they crumble to dust. Rents appear in the walls tearing through the elder evil's body and giving the PCs an avenue of escape. If the PCs don't move quickly, the walls contract, shrinking by 1 foot every round until the elder evil implodes. Any creatures inside are utterly destroyed.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The room has the following features.

Pit: The pit is 60 feet deep. Characters falling in the pit take 5d6 points of damage.

Cracked Floor: Squares containing cracks and fissures count as difficult terrain.