BOOK OFTHE UNDERWORLD

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introduction

Let's go deep—deeper than any dungeon. Scrape away the surface world, and you'll find the underworld: a seething anthill of monsters and mysteries, an endless labyrinth of caverns and lightless citadels, and a realm of adventure and unfathomable peril.

Descend at your own risk! For if you go below, you will not return unchanged.

WELCOME TO THE BOOK OF THE VIIDERWORLD

This book offers ways to expand your 13th Age adventures into the realms below. Just as the core rulebook sketches out the Dragon Empire and invites you to make it your own, this book suggests a host of subterranean realms and encounters you can incorporate into your campaign. Excavate this book to find hidden connections, or dig your own passageways between our caves and dark places. A descent into the underworld is always spiritual on some level—drawn from the subconscious and the suppressed. Use fragments from our imaginings as openings to explore your own

(Of course, we also provide treasures and monsters and adventure hooks and irreverent asides, as you've come to expect from 13^{th} Age sourcebooks.)

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE UNDERWORLD introduces and explores the underworld's overall structure, including generic terrain, environmental tables, and travel hazards. It also explains why the icons may be interested in the underworld and what they hope to accomplish by sending adventurers into the deep.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERWORLD ADVENTURING provides plenty of inspiration for running adventures and campaigns in the underworld. Here, you'll find the basic rules for underground action and survival in the depths, as well as rules for hazardous montages, ways to use player input to generate your underground environment, and ideas to get your adventurers into the underworld. Whether you're after a short jaunt into the Hollow Realm to highlight your adventurers' One Unique Things or are planning an entire campaign where the sun and moon are nothing more than fables told by strangers, you'll find lots of useful stuff here. Let your players tell *you* why the current cave they're in is cool and different from the last one . . . and if the cave is cool because the monsters in it are trying to eat the adventurers, this chapter covers that, as well. **CHAPTER 3: UNDERLAND** introduces the uppermost layer of the underworld, directly below the surface world. Underland is closest in tone to the Dragon Empire you've come to know on the surface. Along with new riffs on familiar themes and iconic conflicts, you'll encounter Forge, Gorogan's Maw, and the Moonwreck Tunnels in new and different ways—from underground.

CHAPTER 4: THE HOLLOW REALM ventures into the strange middle realm of the underworld, where the certainties of the surface give way to hidden ettercap cities and gods, kingdoms lit by a Mechanical Sun, and the oldest ruins of the Dwarf King's empire. Think of the Hollow Realm as a region lost to the ages. As the ages roll on, this realm sinks deeper and deeper, until

CHAPTER 5: THE DEEPS are the deepest places in the underworld. Yes! They really are. At this point, you leave the world of the Dragon Empire and enter a mythic space that represents—well, it could represent a lot of things... The tombs of the gods? The drain of ages where forgotten realms fall into entropy? The birthplace of the greatest dungeons? Sure, why not? In this chapter, you'll find multiple takes on the Deeps and the challenges the adventurers may encounter when they hit this epic-tier area.

Аррепдіх

You'll find a handful of magic items strongly associated with the underworld's creatures and features under *Treasures of the Underworld* (see page 82).

Additionally, several new monsters pop up in these pages. Instead of a dedicated monster chapter, we added new monsters directly to the chapters that did the most to guide their use. The *Monster Index* in the Appendix is your level-and-role guide to these newcomers.

Note that several new monsters in this book use concepts introduced after the 13th Age core rulebook—weakling monsters count half as much as a regular monster of their type when building battles, and elite monsters count half again as much (150%).

On Monsters

We've published many books that touch on the drow, the dwarves, and the history of the Deeps. As this is a sourcebook rather than a dedicated adventure, we decided not to reprint most of the monsters and text from earlier books here in *Book of the Underworld*.

However, since *Book of the Underworld* deliberately shifts between tiers—the deeper you go, the higher the tier—and several sections mention using leveled-up versions of lower-tier creatures, we offer this reminder of the simplest technique for leveling-up monsters. **Double 'em:** The quickest way to level-up adventurer- and champion-tier monsters is to add three levels. Add +3 to each defense, double their hit points, and double their attack damage. Then, double the amount of hit points for any abilities that involve healing. Ongoing damage may or may not double—typically, you'd add 5 points per tier, but if the monster's attacks don't obey that guideline, bump it up by a 5-point increase per tier or by an amount that fits the impact the ongoing damage is supposed to have.

That's about it! Use this technique in places such as page 59 and page 73 where we suggest leveling up several creatures from the 13th Age Bestiary and the 13th Age Bestiary 2.

Shocked: A couple monsters in this book employ the *shocked* condition introduced in the *13th Age Bestiary 2*. While a character is shocked, they roll twice for all d20 rolls (attack rolls, saves, skill checks, etc.) and take the lower result.

References to Other Books

When possible, we spell out the names of other books we refer to in the text. However, that doesn't work in some tables, so here's a list of common abbreviations you might encounter:

13A: 13th Age core rulebook
13B: 13th Age Bestiary
13B2: 13th Age Bestiary 2
13TW: 13 True Ways
13G: 13th Age Glorantha
BoA: Book of Ages
BoD: Book of Demons
CC: The Crown Commands
EST: Eyes of the Stone Thief
F&F: Fire and Faith
HM&LC: High Magic & Low Cunning
SBS: Shards of the Broken Sky

CHAPTER I:

AΠ OVERVIEW OF THE VΠDERWORLD

The underworld is a vast network of tunnels and chambers mostly natural, some excavated over the ages by forces known and unknown—that extends far below the surface world. The dwarves once ruled parts of this underground land, until they were driven out by war, disaster, and machinations of the dark elves. In this age, the dwarves lay claim to underworld treasures they no longer hold and the webs of the dark elves' spider allies clog ancient, dwarven tunnels.

The underworld gets wilder and weirder the deeper you go. Caves and tunnels give way to underground seas, deposits of raw elemental energy, portals to other dimensions, and regions where time flows differently. Living dungeons swim through the earth, clawing their way up toward the surface.

The underworld has—very roughly—three distinct sections, although that's just a narrative convenience, as the tunnels and caves intertwine on multiple levels. The space below is threedimensional, full of sloping passages, endless stairs, and caves above other caves.

Vnderland

Underland is the underworld's uppermost region. Closest to the surface, it regularly interacts with the sunlit lands. There are hundreds of ways in and out of Underland; the barrier between the realms is extremely porous. Any cave mouth, cellar, deep well, or crack in the ground could connect to a passageway that leads to Underland's maze of tunnels and small caverns.

Some familiar factions from the Dragon Empire hold parts of Underland. The Dwarf Kingdom below Forge extends into Underland; as does the territory of the dark elves. Various surface icons also have agents and outposts in Underland.

THE HOLLOW REALM

The Hollow Realm is deep enough that it has little contact with the surface, yet vast enough to incorporate entire kingdoms. Gigantic caverns that contain cities, seas, and bizarre biomes where strange life forms thrive are common here.

THE DEEPS

The deepest parts of the underworld blur into other planes of existence—or perhaps they just have their own strangeness. Either way, they are the most perilous areas of the underworld. Definitely epic-level territory!

icons & the vnderworld

You may have already established iconic interests in the underworld in your campaign. If not, here are some possibilities to get you started. Like many of our world-arranging notions, most of these suggestions are for groups that want to try something new in their campaign, not plotlines we support in this sourcebook!

Archmage: Perhaps the Archmage takes an active interest in the underworld. Many of the magical wards and arcane machines that protect the Empire are located underground and must be regularly protected and renewed — why not have his agents gather some interesting monster tissue samples and collect some weird glowing rocks for experiments while they're down there? If your campaign believes in serious academic research, the University of Horizon regularly mounts expeditions into the underworld.

Crusader: The Crusader may see the underworld as *Phase II.* Yes, he is first and foremost the icon who best understands the threat posed by demons. However, the Crusader is also the Dark Gods' armored fist—forging a path for their return.

What happened to the Dark Gods? Perhaps the forces of light buried them underground? Maybe the dark temples in the underworld hold the keys to the Crusader's ultimate triumph? If so, the Crusader would rather not tip his hand until he's ready; but, to prevent other icons from interfering, small scouting parties could blend in with adventurers and underworld denizens while they map out the dark temples and obstacles he must conquer.

On hellholes: As a rule, hellholes open on the surface, not in the underworld. But, that's our rule. If your campaign allows hellholes to blossom in the underworld, it could change everyone's lives. Maybe something the Crusader already accomplished is responsible for bringing hellholes to the surface where he can identify and kill them?

Diabolist: The Diabolist isn't that interested in the underworld—or so she claims. She has cults and spies down below, of course, but maintains that her concern lies with the Dragon Empire, not the lands below. Trust her. Demons never lie.

Dwarf King: Hoo boy. The Dwarf King claims ownership of the *entire* underworld, but especially the old dwarven territories like the Throne Under The Mountain (page 68) and the Dwarven Ruins (page 56). He effectively rules Castle Homeguard (page 67), the Dwarven Mines (page 28) and (sort of) the Reclaimer's Guild (page 65), where he maintains order and dispatches justice. Dwarven armies patrol the tunnels and caverns around the north-west of Underland and mount regular punitive expeditions against the derro and other denizens of the underworld.

Previous Dwarf Kings ruled a much larger portion of the underworld in past ages, and their authority lingers in places. Anyone who enters the underworld walks in the king's domain, if they choose to think of it that way.

Enmity of the Dwarf King: If you're running an underworldcentric campaign, consider giving players a free negative relationship with the Dwarf King, unless they take steps to make it a conflicted or positive relationship by giving him his proper tribute of treasure and magic items.

The Legacy of Underhome

The underworld is the dwarven homeland, and the stone remembers. Dwarf King iconic benefits are especially potent down below, as many beings respect—or fear—the dwarves' hammers. Here, there are doors, portals, traps, and wards that respond only to commands issued in the Dwarf King's name. So, anyone with a positive or conflicted relationship with the Dwarf King gets special consideration when exploring any old, dwarven ruins. Allow your players to spend their benefits to call up stony spirits, open magically sealed portals, or decode ancient runes. They'll need it. The dwarves made numerous enemies in days of yore, and they continue to antagonize underworld dwellers by claiming ownership of all treasures under the earth.



Elf Queen: Neither the high nor wood elves walk in the darkness below. However, the silver folk—the dark elves—have extensive holdings in the depths. Not all drow are loyal to the Elf Queen—a splinter faction venerate She Who Spins (page 70) instead—still, the Elf Queen's underworld influence is considerable, if subtle. Her underworld agents often carry *starshards* (page 82).

Emperor: The Emperor sees the underworld as a source of danger and has fortresses built to guard known entrances to Underland, in case an invading host of orcs or other monsters swarms out of the darkness. However, the Empire cannot guard against all the unknown portals and hidden pathways. Rebels and criminals use secret passages and caves to plot against the Empire, often making the physical underworld and the criminal underworld synonymous. Much like his ally, the Dwarf King, the Emperor sometimes dispatches military expeditions into the southern parts of Underland . . . but these projects rarely end well. Dwarves may be at home in the underworld, but humans definitely aren't. In recent years, expeditions to the underworld have been used as punishment details. Condemned criminals receive a sword, a lantern, a backpack, a blank sheet of parchment, and a promise of freedom if they return with a pack full of treasure and a reliable map of the realms below.

Great Gold Wyrm: The Great Gold Wyrm's influence is the same down below as it is above; wherever heroes and paladins walk, they hear the Wyrm's whispers.

As it's possible to access the Abyss via the underworld, a few of the Wyrm's more zealous pilgrims and assassins may seek routes that could bring them close to the Wyrm's physical body in the depths of the great hellhole.

High Druid: The current incarnation of the High Druid has yet to show any great interest in the underworld. However, previous High Druids either dwelt in the green depths, or extended their minds through the *rootweb* to influence events below. In the section about the rootweb (page 39), we include notes about terrain that might interest the High Druid—and will definitely interest player character druids with the Terrain Caster talent.

Lich King: All the underworld is a grave. Numerous corpses are buried here—in tombs, barrows, and corpse pits—and they all belong to the Lich King. His influence is somewhat muted in the depths; his fortress of the Necropolis is surrounded by the sea, so his minions must travel all the way down into the Hollow Realm to reach the underworld. Long ago, in an attempt to extend his reach, the Lich King dispatched lich and vampire minions to set up satrapies and colonies in the underworld; however, not all these undead kings of the darkness still pay fealty to the lord of the Necropolis.

Orc Lord: The Orc Lord has an active presence in the northwest of the underworld. He calls up hordes of orcs and goblins from the swarming caves, and his agents and spies sneak into the Dragon Empire through subterranean passageways.

Imperial generals live in fear that the Orc Lord might find a route that enables him to conceal whole armies and march them up from below to lay waste to Glitterhaegen or Axis. The strength of the Empire's legions rests on the Imperial Dragon Cavalry and what good are flying dragons against underground foes? Elsewhere in the underworld, the Orc Lord takes on a messianic quality among certain groups of underworld denizens. They say the Orc Lord will soon march on the lands below to weld all monsters of the dark places into one vast and invincible horde. He'll destroy the dark elves . . . or the surface folk . . . or the dwarves . . . well, the tales vary. Many would-be warlords and charlatans in the underworld claim they work in the Orc Lord's name.

Priestess: Certain texts claim that the sunlit lands above are the domain of the Gods of Light, but the shadowy underworld belongs to the Dark Gods. If this is true, then the underworld is a most dangerous place for the Priestess and her followers. Perhaps that's why her Cathedral extends so far underground; it's a fortress against attack from below.

We don't do much with the Priestess in this book. If you want a bit more, introduce the Lamplighters—a mendicant order of holy folk who wander the lands below, bearing wondrous lamps of glowing crystal carved from the same divine stone as the Cathedral itself. Some Lamplighters create hidden refuges to shelter travelers and lost souls; others traipse endlessly through the tunnels, as though they are attempting to work off some lengthy punishment.

Prince of Shadows: In case you hadn't noticed, there are plenty of shadows in the underworld—and you can bet the Prince knows them all. It's not clear whether all smugglers, spies, and saboteurs work for the Prince, but some of them must.

As usual, we don't explore the Prince of Shadows' activities in detail, because such secrets are best left for your campaign to create.

Sharp shadows: If you want to draw a sharp line between the Prince of Shadows' surface world activities and underworld activities, one option is to make the icon a much more militant figure in the underworld. Mercenary warbands and cave pirates might fly flags marked with his sigil. Or perhaps the Prince moves his forces below the surface like pieces on a chessboard blockading one route, then another; supporting one faction, then their rivals—as he shapes the underworld's future.

The Three: Really, down here, it's the One. The occasional soon-to-be-immolated volcano cultist aside, the Red has next to no interest or influence in the underworld. The Blue seeks arcane power and control of Underland around Drakkenhall, but prefers to focus her attention on the surface and the Dragon Empire. The Black, though . . . the Black's reach in the underworld is greater than on the surface. She commands legions of assassin-monks, cave wights, slime sorcerers, and other denizens of darkness. She rules over secret pathways that connect to the caves under Drakkenhall, which allow her to communicate with her Blue sister without the Emperor or Archmage (but maybe not the Prince of Shadows) knowing. Some in the underworld say that darkness is the breath of the Black: "one day, her breath will rise to cover all the world."

ÍCONS: FALLEN, VANISHED, AND REFUSED

These fallen icons have more influence in the underworld than on the surface. In an underworld-centric campaign, consider letting the players take relationships with them.

The Explorer: An icon from another age, the Explorer (*Book of Ages*, page 98) was a fabled adventurer and traveler whose voyages took her beyond the Dragon Empire. She opened up the wider world across the seas to the Empire's inhabitants, bringing back wonders they had never before seen; her travels on the surface and in the overworld are legend. It is said she also traveled into the underworld, to the uttermost deeps, making maps and charts of all her journeys. The Explorer is likely dead (unless she found the Fountain of Youth or some other form of immortality), but a wanderer in the lands below might yet find a sign she left behind scratched into the rock face—the Explorer's sigil and an arrow that points the way.

The Explorer doesn't have any real servants or agents, but there's an unofficial society of guides, traders, former adventurers, sages, and other travelers who venerate her memory and help all who follow in her footsteps.

The Gold King: A former Dwarf King, turned miserly and miserable . . . oh, and also undead (13^{th} Age Bestiary 2, page 112). Our default assumption is that he hangs out somewhere in the Hollow Realm, plotting against reality; however, if you want him to take a more active role in underworld affairs, he might count as a full-on evil icon and not simply a past failure.

The Great Ghoul: Similarly, the Great Ghoul (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 120) fits perfectly into underworld-centric campaigns that need another villain—the necrophage might be behind an attack on the surface, or he might start wars between various underworld kingdoms, hoping to generate a ready supply of tasty corpses and necromantic energies.

The Two—She Who Spins, and He Who Weaves: Like the Three, She Who Spins in Darkness and He Who Weaves With Joy are loosely allied by nature and share common goals and followers; however, they employ different methods and present radically different facets to the world. She Who Spins in Darkness is the arachnid goddess of the ettercaps (13th Age Bestiary, page 72) . . . a goddess of secrets and hidden truths. Primarily worshipped by ettercaps (or maybe her most cherished worshippers turn into ettercaps?), she does also have followers among the drow and other underworld races, as well as in the surface world. She Who Spins collects whispers; her temples are listening posts where her spies gather and extort secrets and offer them to her altars. Her followers sustain themselves mainly through murder and banditry. Cultists of She Who Spins raid trade caravans and dwarven mines throughout the underworld.

He Who Weaves With Joy is another spider-god, though he is little-known outside the deeper underworld. He delights in connections, structures, and building and rebuilding. He, too, is an archivist, dedicated to preserving the best of each culture and rebuilding civilization after whatever world-shattering cataclysm ends the age. Both gods are manifest in the world and dwell in the Web City (page 70). They work together to gather information and protect one another's agents, but She spins nooses and tripwires while He attempts to weave a better world.

Unlike the icons, these manifest gods do not announce themselves with symbols. As gods of secrets and stealth, they prefer not to brand themselves or their followers. The gods of the world's non-manifest deities may be fond of symbols; but, so far as the Two are concerned, symbols are for the icons.

THE CALLING

There's a price adventurers may pay for traveling in the underworld, known as the Calling. It's a sensation, an alien desire that grips people who've spent too long in the underworld. Those who succumb to the Calling are driven to carry out its bizarre psychic commands, with no understanding as to what the purpose of these commands might be.

The Calling might compel its victims to travel into dangerous parts of the underworld, deliver strangers or artifacts from trade caravans deeper into the underworld, or draw them into perilous bargains with other tainted creatures. This cryptic force works like an icon—and it replaces one or more of a player's icon relationship dice. Fighting a battle against the drow, derro, or underkrakens (*13 True Ways*, page 249) is the usual way players pick up Calling dice. When the escalation die reaches 3+ in such a battle, everyone must make an easy save at the end of the battle. Fail the save, and you hear the Calling (see below). If the escalation die reaches 6, this roll requires a normal save. A campaign loss against such foes causes everyone to make a hard save against the Calling.

A character who hears the Calling must choose one of their icon relationship dice and temporarily change it to a Conflicted (always Conflicted) relationship with the Calling. The Calling follows the same general guidelines as other icon relationships. Roll a 6, and your relationship with the Calling gives you a benefit—a vision of some place nearby, the temporary ability to speak the secret tongue of the troglodytes, or psychic resistance to the power of the intellect devourers. Roll a 5, and it's a benefit with a cost—or a benefit with a drawback—like a bizarre or troubling hallucination. Maybe you gain psychic resistance to the intellect devourer colony, but you also hallucinate one of your fellow party members being hollowed out by the brain bugs. Or, perhaps, learning the truth about your party member was the benefit, and the delusion that you're immune to psychic attacks is the drawback . . .

The Calling might be the power behind the derro, or the collective will of the underkraken, or the living darkness of the underworld turned rancid and sentient—fallout from the ancient wars between the dwarves and the drow. Relationship dice turned to the Calling return to normal during the next full heal up or after leaving the underworld. Or so you think, anyway.

The Vaults of the Called

Oh, you're healthy. Good. Good. We'll make use of you. Think of us as smiths of meat. Artists of bone and sinew. Our home is full of poison, our hearts and veins are full of poison, so we must perforce use yours. In our home, we have hospitals and abattoirs; everything is scrubbed clean and sharp-edged and brightly lit. All mirrors and razors down below. Your heart is healthy, so I'll cut it out and put it in my own chest. We're all patchwork; we cover the surgery scars with bristly beards and long hair. Oh, the poison gets us all in the end—it's in our brains too, and those we can't replace. But the body goes on, even if the brain rots. Did you know—hehe—the conscience is the first bit to go?

- a derro speaks

CHAPTER 2:

UΠDERWORLD Adventuring

In this chapter, we discuss how the underworld is typically used in gaming, how to zero in on the aspects that most appeal to you for your campaign, and how to use those features to create a unique underworld environment for your game. We also include stats for various carnivorous caves; not because they're ubiquitous or hugely important, but because your players will know that there are carnivorous cave stats in this book and worry a little every time you say, "so you walk into the cave mouth?"

THE UNDERWORLD'S VSVAL ROLES

The underworld has five distinct, but overlapping, roles in myth and legend—and in gaming:

- *Underworld as the source of evil.* Bad things live down here. Evil monsters live in caves. Horrible things hide underground from sunlight. Conspirators meet in subterranean chambers.
- *Underworld as a hidden realm.* Stories tell of marvelous lands underground—of kingdoms and lost cities and hollow earths.
- *Underworld as the afterworld.* The land of the dead or the realm of chthonic gods.
- *Prosaic underworld*. Actual caves and catacombs—the real underground spaces.
- *Weird underworld*. Basically, a giant world-girdling dungeon crammed with bizarre monsters, where we get all the strange denizens in bestiaries and monster manuals.

We're not out to embrace all these roles in 13th Age, but we're definitely interested in the commonalities between the roles—traits that are universally true of literary and mythic versions of the underworld:

- *The underworld is strange & perilous.* While the surface realm of the Dragon Empire is pretty bizarre and magical in its own right, the underworld is one step weirder. It's a place where nothing is as it seems, and nothing is normal.
- *The underworld involves dangerous journeys.* Traveling the underworld is always an arduous task. There may be paths and roads down here, but they're not safe, even for the dwarves.
- *There's something valuable down there.* Going into the underworld to win some transformative or redemptive treasure is part of many primal myths. Adventuring isn't punishment. Give the player characters a reason to search for something big.

ŤHE UNDERWORLD'S ROLE İN YOVR CAMPAİGN

Before you include an underworld-centered adventure or sequence in your campaign, it's worth taking a moment to decide which aspects of the underworld most appeal to you. Are you a classics scholar who'd prefer to fill the underworld with ghosts, three-headed dogs, and Hadean gods? A conspiracy nut who likes the idea of Spider Agartha, crashed alien spaceships, and dark elves in black? Or an old-school dungeon crawler who wants an underworld full of Gygaxian beasties and magic wells?

Additionally, you should decide how important the underworld is to your campaign. Do you want it to be a regular feature, an infrequent but recurring element, or a once-off? The ease with which the player characters can access the underworld typically determines how often it'll show up—if every cave mouth and sewer ultimately connects to the greater underworld, then it'll show up a lot. However, if there are only a handful of ways to get to the lands below and doing so is a major undertaking, the incursion of underworld creatures will be a rare event. Decide how easy it is for the adventurers to reach the underworld at adventurer- and champion-tiers, and the rest will follow.

Monster Dispenser

Of course, you don't need to actually enter the underworld to have bits of it show up in your campaign; bits that can tunnel up from below and start eating people. Like demons, incursions from the underworld are a useful way to drop level-appropriate monsters into the middle of a previously safe place. Want to threaten a bucolic farming village or have a series of monster fights in the middle of New Port? Have monsters break out of the underworld.

QUICK Visit

The underworld lends itself to short adventures—just close any connecting tunnels to pinch off a section of the lands below, and you've got a single location that can support a single adventure. An underworld visit might entail a dungeon crawl through natural tunnels that ends with a confrontation between the adventurers and whatever weird monsters live down there. Choose a location from Underland or the Hollow Realm, cut it off from the rest of the underworld, and give the player characters a reason to go there and kick butt.

Some options include:

- Tack the Burrowdeep warrens (page 23) onto Burrow no need to explore additional parts of the underworld. Also "cutesy magic academy hides dark secret" is a great hook for any players who want to dungeon crawl through Hogwarts.
- We explicitly designed Stormbreak (page 41) to be a selfcontained dungeon ruin that hints at deeper realms.
- A quick visit might hint at deeper regions the players may want to explore later in the campaign, without giving them a reason to keep going immediately. For example, an icon may ask the PCs to travel into the underworld to rendezvous with a trading company and bargain for some strange treasures from the Deeps. They must dodge dwarven assayers, ettercap bandits, and the rivals of whatever icon dispatched them in the first place.

Longer Adventure

A longer adventure in the underworld involves more travel and visits to multiple locations. Add tension by making it a race against time—for instance, the player characters only get a limited number of full heal-ups to complete their quest. Some adventure seeds to get you started:

- The Long March Home: The player characters get stuck in the underworld by mistake—they're abducted by drow slavers, they walk through the wrong one-way portal, a living dungeon spits them out in the depths They have to make their way back to the surface, which means they must make friends with locals who can guide them, work out how to survive in the darkness, and find an exit from the underworld to get home.
- Quest for the Thing: The classic "save the princess by finding the rare herb" story. Swap out the princess for an icon, wizard, guild master, dragon, duly elected official, rich merchant, or other quest dispenser; then, swap out the rare herb for underworld crystals, ancient dwarven relics, enchanted ores, or ichor from the Dismal Sump. It's a *Ye Olde Fetch Quest*, livened up by the underworld's novelty.
- Emergency Repairs: Some of the Archmage's wards (or the Diabolist's sigils, or the Crusader's nailed-shut hellholes, or the Dwarf King's ancient barriers, etc.) grow weak—the forces of evil may soon breach them. It's up to the player characters to descend into the depths and fix the wards/sigils/barriers before the bad guys break free.

Tier- or Campaign-Length Plot

For a series of adventures covering a whole tier of levels or a whole campaign, consider the following:

• **Reclaimers:** The characters try to clear out and reclaim a lost section of the underworld. The dwarven citadels are the

obvious candidates here—there's the Reclamation Guild, the fortress of Castle Homeguard, and rogue expeditions from Forge all trying to accomplish parts of this goal. Alternatively, the characters might be trying to reclaim some other lost region, like Stormbreak (page 41). Each adventure involves battling local monster kingpins, securing self-contained regions of the area, making alliances with other powers, and discovering lost secrets from past ages.

- **Diplomats:** A surface power (the Emperor, the Priestess, the Prince of Shadows) sends the characters to make alliances with the various underworld kingdoms and entities. The PCs must find out who the movers and earthshakers are, figure out what they want, and determine which approach will work best to convince them to work with the surface realm. This quest might draw the PCs into reigniting the war between elves and dwarves, get them involved in the battle for the Mechanical Sun, or find them literally entangled in the philosophical streets of Web City.
- **Cartographers:** Someone gives the PCs a piece of parchment and a pen and tells them to bring back a detailed map of the underworld. They must mark all important kingdoms, trade routes, hazards, monster lairs, and all entrances and exits of any size. They don't get paid—or are told not to return—until they have it all mapped.
- Searching for the Surface: This takes *The Long March Home* described above and adds the complication of a whole tribe of followers the player characters must look after. Maybe a whole Imperial city sinks, and the player characters must guide the survivors home. Or, perhaps the rag-tag band of desperate survivors come from a realm of the underworld that's overrun by the drow/troglodytes/underkrakens, and reaching the mythical surface is their only hope.

CREAŤÍNG VNDERWORLD ENVÍRONMENŤS

We're all broadly familiar with the surface world's terrain, as it's where we live (unless you don't—a hearty welcome to any Morlocks reading this book). It's easy to imagine how one area blends into another—how the player characters might cross the sea to land at the coast, then travel through sandy dunes, across grassy plains, through wooded hills, up rocky snow-capped mountains, etc. However, when they enter the underworld, it's just generic caves as far as the eye can see—which isn't far, as it's dark and cramped.

During a long campaign set in the underworld, you'll have encounters in the wilderness between the named locations and battles and ambushes in nameless tunnels and caverns. Rather than providing tables to determine the size, shape, geology, and features of random generic cavern #427, we decided it would be much more interesting and 13^{th} Age-y to improvise these battlefields on the fly, using player input.

Set the Scene

First, decide where the encounter will take place:

- A natural tunnel
- A natural cavern
- A worked passageway or underground road
- A ruined structure or once-inhabited area

Ask Questions

Next, ask the players questions about the battlefield (or, if you prefer, use the questions we provide to spark your own design). One question per player is usually the right number. Ask focused questions that push the players to be specific within constricted boundaries. Avoid asking questions the players can negate: *"there's nothing notable about this cave, it's just a cave,"* or ones that could spoil your whole adventure: *"this cave is a living dungeon! And it's carrying us up to the surface to eat us!"* An exception, of course, is if your players come up with such a great idea that you decide to junk your adventure and run with it—and if you do that, I salute you!

Players tend to be far more cruel and tough than fair-minded GMs; given the opportunity, most players will happily drop terrible perils on themselves. However, if you find your players abusing the *questions* mechanic to give themselves advantages in battle, start phrasing questions to explicitly favor the bad guys: *"The bad guys have a tactical advantage in this fight—what is it?"*

Even if the players' answers don't affect the fight, they'll still make the encounter setting more distinctive.

LAYOUT

- The cave's shape reminds you of some object—a tool, weapon, vegetable, or creature—what is it?
- The cave has a low ceiling—how low? Which party members can stand upright?
- Which way does the cave floor tilt? How steeply?
- How much of the cave can you see from your starting point? What's blocking your view?
- There are at least two exits from this cave—are there more? How hard is it to access other ways out?
- You get the impression this cave wasn't formed naturally—is it a monstrous burrow, or the result of an explosion or other catastrophe?

Terrain

- What's unusual about the stone here? Why does it catch your eye?
- There's a large, physical barrier in the middle of the cave—what is it?
- Something here is unstable or prone to collapse—what is it?
- The cave is broken into several sections, some higher than others. How steep are the divides? How can you get up to those raised platforms?
- The cave has plenty of places to seek cover—what and where are they? Why might you hesitate to take cover there?

HAZARDS

- What worries you about this fight? Which part of this area fills you with foreboding?
- How stable is your footing here? What about elsewhere in the cave?
- There are signs some disaster hit this cave quite recently. Was it a flood, a quake, a fire, or something else?
- If—hypothetically speaking—a gigantic chunk of rock were going to fall down and squash someone in the middle of this fight, where's the most likely spot for such a collapse?
- What's pooling in the corner of the cave? If it's water, is it unusually hot or cold? If it's not water . . . what the hell *is* it?
- You smell something strange in the air—what might it be?

İllumination

- Some cave feature prevents you from using your light sources effectively here—what is it?
- There's one natural source of light in this cave—what is it?
- There's an artificial source of light here—what is it?
- Your lamplight flashes off something shiny or polished—what might it be?



On occasion, 13th Age designers attempt to create simple systems for tracking illumination and darkness. Such systems have yet to make it into print, and we don't include one in this book either, despite the possibility that the underworld might be an extremely dark place. Systems for tracking visual acuity, distance, and

illumination are no more in the spirit of 13th Age than systems for tracking encumbrance. There are games in which this type of detail is the point of adventuring (hello, Torchbearer), but 13th Age has other stories to tell.

If you have just enough simulationist roleplayer in you—or at your gaming table—to be concerned about how tough it might be for some surface-dwellers to see in the underworld, see if any of the following approaches make you feel better:

This isn't our world: Yes, our world is dark underground—but magic and supernatural phenomena are also either missing... or at least extremely unlikely to provide illumination underground! This underworld needn't be anything like our world's underground, though. We're postulating a somewhat heavily populated magical realm that contains entire cities and strange cultures—let's agree for a moment that, in this world of strange magic, it's highly possible there are all sorts of magical and natural (but different!) light sources.

Magical races: So many types of strange-and-more effective vision have appeared in F20 roleplaying games over the years. Don't get mired in the murky details, rather use the point: it's perfectly OK to say that nearly all the races who aren't exactly like us can somehow see better in the dark!

Icon relationships, One Unique Things, and backgrounds: And for those human heroes who most certainly have eyes that work like ours, well, the first thing icons provide their champions is the ability to not be hopelessly out of their depth as soon as they go underground. So, use an icon relationship advantage, a One Unique Thing, or a character's background details to explain why seeing in the underworld isn't a problem for said character.

SURFACE FEATURES

- There's faded writing or carving on the wall—do you recognize the language? What does it say?
- What grows in the cave? Or, it is entirely lifeless?
- Can you see bones or other remains? If so, have they been damaged?
- There are campsite remains nearby—how old would you say they are? Did surface-folk or underworlders camp here?
- Are there any tracks or marks on the ground here?

Shadow of the Past

- Though this place has fallen into ruin, you can still see traces of its former function—what was it?
- There's an ancient sign carved into the stone above one doorway. What does it say? Is it a warning?
- What happened here? Was this place abandoned—or was it conquered?
- It's clear there were at least two distinct habitation periods here—first, the people who built this place; then, someone else who squatted in the ruins. Who were these two groups?

Emotional Associations

- Something about this cave reminds you unexpectedly of home—what is it?
- What were you discussing just before you encountered your foes? Did your discussion reflect your surroundings—and if not, why not?
- Imagine what might happen if you perish during this fight how would your companions make this place a fitting tomb for you? What would your enemies do with your body?
- For just one instant, you mistake some cavern feature—a rocky outcrop, a broken column, or a stalagmite—for a statue. It was only a trick of the light, but what did you think the statue depicted?

traveliпg through the vпderworld

The underworld contains more than just tunnels, slightly narrower tunnels, somewhat slanted tunnels, and big and small caves There are also rushing underground rivers that plunge over fathomless cliffs into the roaring darkness; corpses of formerly living dungeons, skeletonized by savage underkrakens; sentient mushroom cities; chunks of hell that float like burning icebergs in a stony sea; living stone corridors that wind around like the world's tormented entrails; angry volcano elementals; deposits of congealed darkness; nests gnawed by nameless things; and the bones of gods. Still, tunnels *are* a large part of it, and it's not easy to travel through the underworld—especially when passageways shift and move.

13th Age doesn't usually concern itself with mundane affairs you won't mark off each day's worth of iron rations or carefully total your encumbrance, for example. Still, the challenge of getting from one place to another and making long and arduous journeys in the dark is part of the fun of an underworld game.

Here, we provide a checklist of sorts for adventurers before they depart on a journey into the underworld:

- **Do you have a guide?** Alternatively, do you already know the route? Do you have a map or way of divining the correct path?
- **Do you have adequate supplies?** This includes gear or spells to deal with hostile environments.
- Are you headed to a level-appropriate region? As a rule of thumb—Underland is adventurer-tier, the Hollow Realm is champion-tier or epic-tier, and the Deeps are epic-tier, though particular areas in each may be unusually hazardous.

If the adventurers satisfy all these conditions, they can complete the journey safely—unless the GM decides to throw a random encounter or two at them, in which case, a montage (page 15) is appropriate for the journey.

If the group doesn't have a guide or map, they must explore to find their way. Have the group leader make a Wisdom skill test to find the right route (adventurer: 25; champion: 30; epic: 35). Each time the leader fails a test, run a hazard (page 15).

If the group doesn't have the right supplies, someone must forage for food and water. The designated hunter must make a skill test to gather supplies (adventurer: 20; champion: 25; epic: 30). If the hunter fails the test, run a hazard for that hunter. If the group attempts the journey without supplies, everyone in the party loses 1d4 recoveries.

If the group is out of their depth, their travel montage becomes a hazard montage (page 16).

Underworld Traders?

Asking about supplies suggests that you'll want your underworld to include places where sentient beings exchange coin or barter for food, gear, and knick-knacks. You'll find references to caravans and traders in this section, as well as notes about the underworld equivalents of inns and other locations where PCs feel like they might relax for a bit.

As you've probably gathered, the economic details some other games employ are not high on our list of concerns. What *are* we concerned with? Icon relationships, of course!

When your players need to rest for a moment or figure out who runs an underworld caravan, use an icon relationship advantage. If the underworld caravan turns out to be run by agents of the Crusader, not only does it add to the story, it might make whatever the caravan transports important to the adventurers' stories.

In other words, we don't need to provide all the details about a gnomish or dwarven trading post your adventurers find in a cavern; in your game, icon relationship advantages see to it that the trading post is actually a haven for followers of the Great Gold Wyrm, and the Orc Lord's troops are about to assault it.

Montages

The concept of montages comes from the 13th Age Game Master's Screen & Resource Book (specifically, the resource book); check it out if you want more examples of this mechanic. Montages are an easy way to make a journey or other lengthy endeavor more interesting and interactive.

Start with a player who is comfortable improvising and ask them to describe a problem the party faces as they travel or undertake an activity, without offering a solution. Then, ask the player to the left of the starting player how *their* PC does something clever or awesome to solve that problem. After they narrate a solution, ask that same player to describe the *next* obstacle the group encounters. The player to their left gets to solve the new problem and then offer up a new obstacle. This continues around the table until each player invents and solves a problem.

Encourage the player coming up with a solution to draw on any of their character's aspects or invent something new, but don't call for any die rolls, even if the solution to a challenge involves combat. Montage events occur in quick, narrative time, allowing the players to invent stories to reinforce their characters' defining qualities-whether those details involve icon relationships, One Unique Things, or backgrounds. Their stories may mention the use of their PCs' powers, but they won't actually use any resources to provide a solution. Pay attention to the vignettes the players create for the montage; those story elements provide excellent source material you can revisit later in the campaign to strengthen each PC's story. When they see elements they created come into play, it reinforces the idea that you and the players are creating a shared story experience (see Tips for Running Your Underworld Adventure on page 17 for further advice on incorporating players' ideas into your game).

Though the players generate their obstacles and the ways to overcome them, you (the GM) still play a part in the montage stories. As each player tells you how their PC solved a problem, narrate what that PC did back to the group, but put a spin on it to highlight the character's heroism, wit, or humor. You don't want to change their core idea too much, but this is your chance to add small details about the PC and the world that help make the story come alive for the players, possibly revealing new information to them or even foreshadowing events to come.

Keep in mind that, depending on your group, players will have different comfort levels with the montage process. Some players may offer so many details and wild ideas that you won't need to add much at all when you play the scene back with embellishments. Other players may choose to provide bare minimum details. It's okay for you or the other players to offer suggestions to reluctant talkers to help flesh out a problem or solution, but each player should always have the final say when they present. After reluctant players see what other players come up with for a few different montages, the process should become smoother for everyone—with more wild, creative, inspirational, and fun outcomes. Once players recognize something they narrated re-enter the game in some way at a later point, they'll be more likely to offer up stories they care about.



HAZARDS

A hazard works similarly to a montage: one player proposes a challenge that must be overcome, and another player describes how their character handles it. The difference is that solving a hazard includes a cost or risk.

The player may expend a resource (a daily spell or power, a benefit from an icon relationship, a recovery, or any other genuine cost) to get past the hazard. Let the player narrate how their character uses the spent resource to overcome the challenge. Alternatively, the player may decide to chance double-or-nothing and make a skill test (adventurer: 20; champion: 25; epic: 30). If they pass, the character overcomes the challenge with style and élan, and there's no cost. If they fail, it hurts *everyone* in the group—they either lose a recovery, take damage (adventurer: 3d6; champion: 4d8; epic: 3d20), or must expend a resource of some sort.

Recoveries or damage?: It's faster and easier to take recoveries away from players when they get hit by hazards than it is to have them mark off hit point damage, then roll a recovery or two to get those hit points back. Still, there are a few times it's worth rolling for actual damage, such as when the PCs are about to enter a fight scene, or when they have some source of temporary hit points that you need to deplete first.

Hazard Montage

A hazard montage combines the above two concepts. Start with one player, who suggests a hazard the group must overcome. The player to their left describes how their character tackles it, and so on around the table until everyone has a chance to describe and overcome a hazard.

If a player runs low on inspiration, have them roll on the list of 50 Underground Hazards below for a prompt. For that matter, if you're running low on inspiration, you could expand many of these prompts into a worthwhile encounter or session.

50 Viderground Hazards

- 1. Rockfall or ceiling collapse
- 2. Unstable bridge
- 3. Poisonous fumes from volcanic vents
- 4. Dangerous fungi with spores and/or swords
- 5. Tainted waters, thick with poison
- 6. Must scale sheer cliff or deep chasm
- 7. Surging lava flow
- 8. Magical radiation
- 9. Wounded monster or traveler begs for help
- 10. Angry rock spirits block the path
- 11. Buried burial ground; dead must be placated
- 12. Traps leftover from dwarf/elf wars
- 13. Purple worm excrement
- 14. Rising floodwaters threaten to drown everyone
- 15. Waste and residue from old magical experiments
- 16. Tollbooth manned by phantoms
- 17. Unexpected drow fortress
- 18. Encysted demon infiltrates dreams
- 19. Rising living dungeon sees adventurers as trail snack
- 20. Ancient dwarven portal demands password
- 21. Cave is really back of gargantuan monster buried in the earth; walk softly to avoid tickling the titan
- 22. Passageway turns out to be gargantuan monster's gullet; run like hell
- 23. Corridor narrows to tiny crawlspace; squeezing through takes time, effort, and many Dexterity checks
- 24. Vast chasm yawns; no way around, so jump, bridge the gulf, or turn back
- 25. Vertical shaft in ceiling is wishing well from another dimension; coins fall at terminal velocity, bombarding PCs. Picking up a coin triggers a *geas* to make child's wish come true.
- 26. Cave floor is a scabbed-over troglodyte oracle pit; step lightly

- 27. Vengeful stone spirit demands adventurers answer three riddles; failure means pit traps
- 28. Region of magical darkness swallows all lights
- 29. Slumbering fire elementals may be ignited by open flames
- 30. Long-buried lich prince tomb exudes necromantic despair; only good cheer can lift spirits and save souls
- 31. Ancient cave paintings include primal hypnotic glyphs, drawing adventurers into crudely animated vision-quest
- 32. A maze of twisty passages, all alike
- 33. Iron-hard tangle of tree roots block passageway
- 34. Druidic earthworks channel telluric energy; disturbing these invisible flows may attract the attention of rootweb vampires or weirder things
- 35. Adventurers inadvertently stumble upon secret drow observation post, currently unoccupied. If the drow discover that the adventurers know their secret, they'll be hunted by assassins for at least the next couple levels. (Experience levels? Dungeon levels? Your call!)
- 36. Massive flock of cave bats threatens to knock adventurers into abyss, mess up hair, or bring up long-lasting childhood trauma that led to vigilantism
- 37. Ancient works of giants carry potent curses against upstart humanity; must magically disarm
- 38. Vampire stones suck blood when touched
- 39. Endless spiral staircase filled with innumerable traps
- 40. Abandoned dwarven fortress blocks path; ghostly dwarves maintain vigil
- 41. Wilderness of trackless caves requires local guide recruited from pallid frog-folk denizens
- 42. Insistent gnome or dwarf trader won't let the group pass without buying random underworld souvenirs and curios; skill check required to avoid being robbed blind
- 43. Labyrinth is the remains of a lost city's sewers; things both monstrous and smelly lurk in the mire
- 44. Only way forward involves jumping from one pillar of stone to the next across a bottomless pit
- 45. Cavern of living flesh; to leave, PCs must hunt down and pin open exit sphincter before juices dissolve them
- 46. Vengeful ghosts possess pack animals, must exorcise
- 47. Ninja monks trained by the Black use the PCs to practice skills; first stealth, then assassination
- 48. Character's favorite magic item exclaims in surprise at a disturbing mosaic on the wall that has something to do with its quirk. Then, the quirk gets much, much worse.
- 49. Airborne stream of wibbles (13th Age Bestiary, page 222; higher level Shards of the Broken Sky, page 129) impedes forward progress. Investigate or avoid? (Either could work.)
- 50. Area is covered in ash and smells disturbingly like incredibly powerful cigars

ŤİPS FOR RUΠΠİΠG YOUR UΠDERWORLD ADVEΠŤURE

This section includes some tips to help you engage your players, get them to invest in the story, and incorporate their input into your underworld game.

Make İt İnteresting

Underworld adventuring is a cross between the dungeon crawl (restricted avenues of movement, lots of monsters and dangers, and ruin exploration) and wilderness adventuring (lots of walking, concern about supplies and random encounters, and exploring a natural, untamed environment). The usual advice about engaging all the players' senses when describing scenes applies doubly in this strange environment.

- Describe what their lights illuminate, not the whole area. Is there something reflective there? Are there other sources of light? Texture and space are important too—the PCs aren't just walking . . . they're clambering, crawling, squeezing, climbing, and always touching things. Is the rock smooth or rough? Wet? Slimy? Crumbly? Chilly? Toothy? Moving uncannily under your hand like a living thing?
- Use tunnels and routes to force the PCs to make hard choices. On the surface, if you're willing to walk far enough, you can avoid most dangerous areas or awkward interactions. In the underworld, tunnel layout circumscribes such choices. Things are always more confined and claustrophobic down here.
- The underworld *preserves*. There's no weather down here. If you want to hide something, you bury it. Underground is where you go to find relics and remnants from previous ages. Play up old legends, old grudges, ruins, and wonders from the past.
- Be nasty. The underworld is supposed to be unsafe and unfamiliar. The PCs are explorers; they must deal with all the peril that entails. All the denizens of the deep may know to stay away from the glowing red mushrooms (they explode) and avoid the Corridor of Blades, but surface folk have never seen such things. A trip to the underworld is like visiting a jungle full of poisonous toads and savage beasts that, for whatever reason, is also a minefield *and* a toxic waste dump. Run tougher fights and don't be afraid to scare the players a bit with monster encounters that are beyond their characters' abilities to fight.
- Similarly, use the need for food, guides, and other supplies to get the players to interact with the various weird factions down here. The underworld is constantly changing—it's unmapped and unplumbed. The player characters are trailblazers.

İntegrate Player İnput

Roleplaying games work best as a conversation. The more opportunities the players have to contribute, the more engaged they become. Players tend to remember ideas and characters generated at the table during the heat of play better than those in pre-written material. (Think back to your own campaigns do the players really remember the intricate plot, or do they remember the in-jokes, the absurd random encounters, and the off-the-cuff NPCs?)

A conversation requires players' input to affect the game; otherwise, it's just an exercise in call and response. Learning to integrate player input into your games is a useful technique to develop. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Get the Players To Build On Each Other: Encourage each player to build on the previous players' suggestions, rather than throwing something new and different into the mix. So, if the first player suggests that the weird tracks on the cave ceiling are slime trails left by slug men, ask the next player to describe rumors her character has heard about the slug people, then have the next player guess which icons the slug people hate. This gives each player a chance to contribute to the setting, without creating an unwieldly sprawl of new concepts.
- Never Negate; Always Direct: Instead of saying "no" to a player's unworkable suggestion, say "yes, but" or "yes, and". Keep the core concept of the player's idea, but suggest ways to temper or adapt it to fit with your campaign. For example, you ask a player to tell you one unusual thing about this cave, and the player says, "it's a time portal. There's a magic arch here that lets you travel back in time-it's, uh, the Sentinel of Forever." You don't want to introduce casual time travel into your campaign, but you also don't want to negate the player's input. So, you say, "yes, but it's not fully active right now. It is a bit leaky, though—there's a chance something might fall through the portal during the fight!" This preserves the player's original idea (TIME PORTAL); gives it an immediate, palpable impact on the game (something's going to come through it when the escalation die hits a random value); and sets up a potential future quest ("we must find a way to charge up that portal so we can go back and stop the apocalypse!"), while also tamping down any immediate disruptions-the PCs can't charge off to another age and leave your adventure behind.
- Break Gonzo Loops: Sometimes, players end up in games of wacky one-upmanship, where each player tries to outdo the last with crazy absurdities. 13th Age can tolerate more crazy absurdity than other games; however, these loops can quickly get out of control. (*"Slug men run casinos!" "And they're run by mobsters!" "Yeah, and these slug-men have tommy guns and talk like Mafia wise-guys"*). Break a gonzo loop by interrupting with a question for the next player that focuses on something else in the encounter, ideally something mundane and grounded to bring the game back down to a fantasy baseline. (*"Ok, you're fighting mobster slugs. There's a rock formation in the middle of the cave—why is it a dangerous place to fight?"*)

- **Reskin and Reflavor:** Watch for images or concepts the players throw out that you can use again later. Can you reskin a monster to fit a player's suggestion—for example, replace traders the players must bargain with later for slug mobsters? Can you add flavor to an encounter that echoes something the players suggested—for example, add blood/ruby/vampire motifs to the evil wizard the party encounters after a player says a cave is unusual because the walls are veined with reddish quartz that gleams like the walls are bleeding? Connecting pre-planned adventure elements to the players' suggestions is a powerful tool that engages players and leverages your preparation. Plus, it makes you look awesome ("you came up with that ruby wizard entirely on the fly? I take my hat off to you, oh great GM").
- Call Backs: Similarly, look for ways to call back or reuse already established elements suggested by the players. The emotional payoff from revisiting an established story point outweighs any inconsistencies. For example, if the players invent a meeting with a friendly gnomish barge captain on an underground river in Session 2 of the campaign, bring that gnome back to rescue the players when they fall into the Sea of Claws in Session 10. Yes, the same gnome finding the player characters again stretches plausibility, but it's a much more satisfying narrative development than creating another disposable and irrelevant seafaring character.

CARNÍVOROUS CAVES

Why, yes, those stalactites do look a bit like teeth. That mossy rock—I suppose it might look like a tongue, from certain angles. But look—if there was a monster here, bones would be scattered around the cave floor, right?

The Monster Also Eats the Bones

Carnivorous caves are kind of like oysters—if oysters were gigantic and lived underground. In larval stage, carnivorous caves are pinkish-grey worms that slither through the underworld until they find a suitable place to nest. Their ideal habitats are medium-sized, well-traveled caverns. The worms dissolve into slime patches that spread out over the cave walls, floor, and ceiling, mimicking the color and texture of the stone. Whenever suitable prey steps on a slime patch (insects for small patches, adventurers for larger ones), out come the tentacles and teeth.

Carnivorous caves are immobile, but hard to kill—you can "defeat" the monster by killing the part that's currently attacking, but the bulk of the infestation survives. Rooted deeply in their host cavern's cracks and hollows, defeated carnivorous caves can lie dormant for decades before they sprout again.



Hostile Hollow

Carnivorous caves never spread onto the surface—they cannot abide sunlight—but, they do infest shadowy cave mouths on the surface. Cave mouths, in this case, being alarmingly literal.

Huge 4th *level wrecker* [OOZE] Initiative: +4

- R: Grabby tentacles +9 vs. AC (up to 3 attacks, each against a different enemy, -2 attack against far away enemies)—30 damage
 - *Natural 16+:* The hostile hollow sweeps the target over to its mouth and may make a *toothy maw* attack on the target as a free action.
- [special trigger] Toothy maw +9 vs. AC—24 damage, and the target is *stuck* (save ends; see *stuck in the maw*, below) Limited use: 1/round.
- *Attack from ambush*: If the hostile hollow manages to take its foes unawares, it may make a free *toothy maw* attack on one unaware target. Spotting a concealed hostile hollow requires a DC 25 skill check.
- *Stuck in the maw:* If a foe is *stuck*, the hostile hollow may make a free *toothy maw* attack on the target each round.
- Sticky: Attempts to disengage from a hostile hollow suffer a -5 penalty.

Flows where it likes: Hostile hollows are immune to opportunity attacks.

Immobile: Hostile hollows cannot move or be moved.

- *Ooze:* Hostile hollows are immune to effects—they can't be dazed, hampered, stuck, hit with ongoing damage and the like.
- *Hard to kill:* A hostile hollow reduced to 0 hit points is not destroyed; it regenerates in 1–6 weeks. Or months. Or years.

Nastier Special

Really hard to kill: If damaged, the hostile hollow regenerates 15 hit points at the start of its turn. It can regenerate five times per battle; however, if it heals back up to its maximum hit points, that use of *really hard to kill* doesn't count against its five-use limit.

AC	18	
PD	18	HP 200
MD	14	

Toothy Cavern

Carnivorous caves this size are found only in the underworld. They're so large, they're practically unkillable—the only thing to do is cleave a path through.

Huge 9th level blocker [OOZE] Initiative: +9

C: Grabby tentacles +14 vs. AC (1d6 +1 attacks, maximum of two per target)—60 damage

Natural even hit: The toothy cavern sweeps the target over to a mouth and can make a *toothy maw* attack on the target as a free action.

[special trigger] Toothy maw +14 vs. AC—30 damage, and the target is *stuck* (save ends; see *stuck in the maw*, below) Limited use: 2/round.

- *Attack from ambush:* If the toothy cavern manages to take its foes unawares, it may make a free *toothy maw* attack on one unaware target. Spotting a concealed toothy cavern requires a DC 35 skill check.
- *Stuck in the maw:* If a foe is *stuck*, the toothy cavern may make a free *toothy maw* attack on the target each round.
- No way out: A toothy cavern can block the exits from its cave. Characters may not move past the cavern or flee using conventional movement (teleportation works). If the toothy cavern takes 150 damage in one round, its sphincters spasm open until its next action.
- *Flows where it likes:* Toothy caverns are immune to opportunity attacks, but cannot move.
- *Ooze:* Toothy caverns are immune to effects—they can't be dazed, hampered, stuck, hit with ongoing damage and the like.

Nastier Special

Cannot die: This particularly tough toothy cavern regenerates 1d6 x 50 hit points at the end of each of its turns, even after it drops below 0 hit points. You must run away from it, or perhaps drop it to -300 or so and use a powerful story connected to an icon relationship advantage to slay the cavern.

AC	23	
PD	23	HP 600
MD	19	

Cave Bezoars

Carnivorous caves are omnivorous, and they consume every scrap of nutrition from their prey. However, they can't digest metals. Any metal and other indigestible material they swallow gets compressed and excreted as a *cave bezoar*—a tightly compacted sphere of junk. When a cave eats multiple magic items in a single meal, the resulting bezoar invariably possesses magical properties and can be highly valuable. Or unstable. Or both.

Here's one version of a cave bezoar as a wondrous item feel free to make up something else that combines quirks that will entertain your adventurers.

Bezoar of the Caves (Wondrous Item)

Recharge 16+: Characters may attune to this misshapen lump of compacted magical items during a full heal-up. When the character calls upon the magic of the bezoar, they gain the benefits of two runes (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 284), as the magic from the items in the bezoar disperses into them. However, this requires the character to make a normal save to see whether they fall under the effects of the Calling (page 10). A character who uses this item may have to replace multiple relationship dice with Calling dice. Quirk: The character spasmodically talks to the sullen voices of the true magic items, which only they can hear.

CHAPTER 3:

VΠDERLAΠD

"We all go Underland in the end, one way or another."

- Gregor, Imperial Gravedigger

Underland is the most shallow part of the underworld—the area nearest to the surface world—where surface politics and struggles still dominate, or are at least highly relevant. This chapter uses the alphabetical approach we applied to the Dragon Empire's geography in Chapter 8 of the 13th Age core rulebook. However, we've provided a quick content guide here, since alphabetical organization sends you skipping all over the world.

QVICK GVIDE

Entrances to the Underworld (page 21): We begin with two lists of 13. The first focuses on the more famous entrances to the underworld: passages, doors, and pits that most everyone knows will take you *down*. The second introduces secret paths that may be surprising to some.

Abyssal Margins (page 23): We're not saying much about this; if you decide to flesh this out for your campaign, it's mostly yours to invent.

Burrowdeep Warrens (page 23): A secret, (shush) magical college!

Domain of the Silver Folk (page 24): We provide six variant understandings of the drow, each of which could serve as a campaign's centerpiece or add an unexpected kick to the backstory of a PC who comes from a place where things are different than they are for most drow.

Dwarven Mines (page 28): The section voted *Least Surprising to Find in a Book About the Underworld* begins with an overview and ends with a list of 13 serious problems plaguing the mines, each containing an adventure (or campaign!) hook.

Fallen Star Caverns (page 28): The caverns are a bit of the overworld smashed into Underland. They provide a shock of the weird in the underworld and establish the fact that adventurers could find anything down here.

Forge, City of Memorials (page 29): Forge gets special treatment. Here, you'll find a brief history of time (from the dwarven point of view), an explanation of Forge's defenses and districts, and some NPCs adventurers may encounter within the Dwarf King's mountain halls. Two lists provide you with 13 dwarven customs and 13 rumors from the tunneled streets.

Gorogan's Innards (page 33): Where there's a Maw on the surface, there are bound to be innards below! Gorogan's mostly-petrified corpse spawns new demons and inspires zealous cultists.

The Lost River (page 35): What would the underworld be without a cryptic, magical river filled with monsters that strip away adventurers' memories and replace them with others. Wait . . . have we talked about this before?

Moonwreck Tunnels (page 36): Whatever catastrophe created Moonwreck also created a warren of tunnels in the underworld. Here, we provide several legends that relate to Moonwreck's creation and some NPCs tied to those legends to populate the tunnels.

Orc Warrens (page 37): The dwarves and drow are not the only ones with hidden tunnels beneath the Dragon Empire; the orcs' organic tunnels also bore through Underland. We include a list of 13 perils in the warrens to challenge—or disturb—the PCs.

Red Dust Exiles (page 38): These are wasteland tunnel survivors who summon bigger monsters to take care of their problems.

The Rootweb (page 39): The underworld's topmost layer forms a network of druidic power. The rootweb spreads throughout Underland, linking the great forests and wellsprings of natural power—like an underground network of ley lines. If you're a druid with the Terrain Caster talent, you're looking for this section.

Salt Mines of the Manticore (page 40): This former Imperial prison/manticore hunting ground now serves as an entrance to Underland. It's not exactly a *safe* entrance—the manticores don't acknowledge that their legitimate hunting days are over—they poach what they refer to as *criminals* from nearby villages.

Smuggler's Tunnels (page 41): Smugglers and agents who wish to move unnoticed by the Empire use the tunnels in and around Shadow Port. We provide a list of 13 encounters to help you use these tunnels in your campaigns.

Steam Tunnels (page 41): These are weird passages near the Isle of Fire to the north, seared by steam and populated by creatures who are not bothered by the heat.

Sunken City of Stormbreak (page 41): This ruined city did not just sink into the Midland Sea, but into the underworld! We give several possibilities for the catastrophe that destroyed Stormbreak, as well as an adventure seed generator to provide you with countless adventure ideas in this city.

Undermarch (page 42): Undermarch used to be one of the great dwarven roads that thread their way throughout the underworld. Now, it's a main thoroughfare through Underland. Despite desperately needing maintenance, it provides a relatively safe path through the underworld, connecting areas of Underland to entrances in the Dragon Empire and the Hollow Realm.

The Whispering Maze (page 47): A grand, underground labyrinth where the icons' forces and voices go awry.



ENTRANCES TO THE VNDERWORLD

There are many, many entrances to the lands below. Some are notorious, while others come as a complete surprise. Here are 13 of each

13 FAMOUS WAYS DOWN

- 1. The Last Door of the Dwarves: Located on the lowest level of Anvil, this door marks the end of the city. Many ages ago, the last Dwarf King to flee Underhome stood on this spot and swore to flee no further. The dwarves solemnly say they shall one day march through this door to retake what they lost. The last door was once a simple, barred door. However, over the centuries, the dwarves remade it into a huge portal with runes of power and carvings of heroes wound around it. It is so large that thirty dwarves could march abreast through it. The dwarves will only open the last door itself when the great war for the underworld begins; however, the Dwarf King regularly sends messengers and expeditions through a smaller door inset in the larger one.
- 2. **Deepwatch Castle:** Deepwatch Castle is likely the Empire's oldest castle still in active use. Legends say the Wizard King himself built it to keep watch over a natural fissure in the earth that leads down to the underworld. Monsters regularly

emerge from this crack, so the Empire posts soldiers here to battle the beasts and drive them back into the darkness. General Conrad, the current Deepwatch commander, fears infiltration by doppelgangers and other shapeshifters. His paranoia infects the castle, divides the garrison into factions, and requires increasingly elaborate tests from the soldiers to prove their loyalty.

- 3. The Well of Luck: The Well of Luck is a famously deep, dry well in the village of Helby. Those who climb down, down, down the rickety ladder reach a network of caves with many passageways and narrow crawls that connect to the underworld. Some who test their luck at the well return laden with loot and glory; however, far more vanish, never to be seen again. Helby is renowned as a nexus for adventurers; what's less well-known is how many of Helby's inhabitants have a little underworldness in their ancestry.
- 4. Hammer's Echo Caves: These caves, located west of Forge near the Hammer Falls, are the prize in a bitter, ongoing war between the Orc Lord's forces and the Imperial and dwarven allies. The Hammer's Echo Caves are a large, relatively easy route into the underworld; an Imperial keep watches over them. The Orc Lord commands armies both above and below the surface—if he manages to capture the Hammer's Echo Caves, he can combine his forces into a devastating horde.
- 5. Gorogan's Maw: Walking into a mountain-sized petrified demon's mouth may not be the most relaxing way to reach the underworld, but it does have the virtue of being quick. You'll either swiftly reach the underworld (specifically, Gorogan's heart, page 33) or you'll have the terrible luck of being in Gorogan's mouth when it un-petrifies for the first time in centuries.
- 6. The Cryptic Stairs: Located on the isle of Necropolis, the cryptic stairs spiral down into the darkness. Each step is a gravestone or tomb; and the dead whisper to each other, weaving spells to protect and guide any who take this route. The cryptic stairs exist in a part of the island neither the Lich King nor the gravekeepers of the Empire claim. While most who use the stairs are the Lich King's minions, some Imperial heroes use this route to get to the underworld in times of need, and the undead do not bar their way.
- 7. The Pit of Justice: The Pit of Justice is found on Throne Point, amidst a nameless city's ruins. The pit is a steep-sided chasm, with three cave entrances at the bottom. Since time immemorial, criminals convicted of certain terrible crimes have been lowered into the pit on ropes to meet their fates. Once they reach the bottom, someone throws down a spear, shield, and bundle of flaming torches. They can choose to starve in the pit, or risk entering the dark caves. The caverns wind their way down into the underworld—although two of the three lead to certain death.
- 8. The Oldwall Door: The Oldwall itself is one of the Empire's strangest structures. It's an ancient fortification—built by unknown hands as a barrier against an unknown enemy— that still magically repairs itself . . . though, never enough to resemble anything but an ancient ruin! Oldwall runs for many miles, but has only one stairway that goes down into

the earth. The Oldwall door is at the bottom of this stair, and it's said the door leads to another, far longer stairway that eventually reaches the underworld. The door opens only once each age, and has yet to open in the 13th age. Adventurers who went through the door in two previous ages returned with artifacts of incalculable worth. However, in three other ages, *things* came up through the door to wreak havoc on the land. It's clear that, if the door opens, it's better for someone to go through from the surface than risk something coming up from below. Therefore, a sentry stands guard at the door at all times. If the door ever unlocks itself, the Empire will send its greatest available heroes to brave the underworld and answer the challenge of the door.

- 9. The Wardway Portal: A former Archmage created the Wardway Portal, a magical mirror that hangs in Horizon. It was originally connected to the network of magical wards and protective arcane structures that undergirds the Empire—if a ward needed to be adjusted or repaired, the Archmage could send a team through the mirror to effect repairs. The Wardway Portal has become somewhat inaccurate over the ages—it still detects wards that need attention, but instead of teleporting the team where they need to go, it deposits them... well, somewhere in the underworld.
- 10. The Undermarch Door: The Undermarch road runs underground, between Anvil and Forge. Halfway along the tunnel is a doorway that connects to Underland. It's heavily guarded, but it regularly opens to admit trade caravans and visitors from below. The Undermarch Door is an easy way to get to (or escape) the underworld, but there's a downside—it's under the Dwarf King's direct control, and he demands his share of any treasure brought out of the depths. Smuggling through this door is immensely profitable, but risky.
- 11. The Garden of the Silver Parade: This garden—a labyrinth of thorn bushes, all covered in dewy spider-webs that glitter in the silver moonlight—belongs to the Elf Queen. Take the correct path through the garden, and your next step teleports you straight down into the heart of the domain of the silver folk (page 24). A matching garden in the wood allows travelers to return to the surface. Persistent rumors insist additional paths through the garden lead to other destinations, and the Elf Queen can teleport an army of dark elves into the heart of Axis or anywhere else in the Empire or underworld she desires.
- **12. Giantsgate Keep:** This castle stands guard over an entrance to the underworld. It was formerly an Imperial fortress, but the giants captured it long ago. The giants occasionally threaten to open the gate beneath the fortress and set horrible monsters loose from the depths; thus, *Giantsgate* has become a byword for *horrors from below*.
- **13.** The Maelstrom: There is a whirlpool that swallows ships and smashes them against the reefs near Shark Tooth Bay in the Midland Sea. However, a good sailor can dodge the hidden rocks and surging currents, and sail a ship right down the Maelstrom into the underworld. It's been known to happen

13 Secret Pathways to the Lands Below

- 1. The Unraveled Dungeon: Just a few feet to the left, and this living dungeon could have been an infamous horror of the age, a fiendish labyrinth of monsters and traps sprawling out beneath the skin of the world. Unfortunately for the dungeon, something in the depths of the underworld snagged it as it climbed toward the surface. As it rose, the dungeon unraveled, leaving a long, linear thread of corridors and chambers stretching down behind it. When it finally broke through to the surface, there was hardly anything remaining; it now appears to be a small dungeon with a few rooms and only one door, which leads to stairs that go down and down and down forever . . .
- 2. Highrock Stairs: A secret entrance to the underworld is hidden under Drakkenhall's ruins. It's heavily guarded by the Blue, and shielded from divination spells by her sorcerers. Any message the Blue sends this way can evade the Archmage's detection; if the Blue defies her oaths and geases to plot against the Empire, the proof is in the traffic on the Highrock stairs.
- 3. The Prince's Portal: Rumors suggest that the Prince of Shadows possesses—or is stalked by, depending on the tale—a magical door that leads to the underworld. The Prince's portal looks like an ordinary door—albeit, battered and in need of a coat of paint—but can move of its own accord, appearing anywhere in the Empire. The impenetrable darkness of the underworld exists on the other side of the door. A thief on the run from the law might turn a corner in some alleyway and find an unlocked door waiting for them—but, is it an escape route, or a portal that leads to an even more horrible doom?
- 4. Imp's Ear Road: A hollow lava tube in the Imp volcano leads down into the underworld. Take the wrong path, and you'll end up swimming through lakes of lava. Take the right path, and you'll merely have to climb along narrow ledges above those lakes of lava to reach the lands below.
- 5. An Unremarkable Pile of Stones Near New Port: The sheep graze contently on the grass that grows around this pile of stones, never suspecting there's a route to the underworld here. Squeeze into the crack between the rocks and just keep crawling into the darkness. After you crawl for two miles, there's room enough for a halfling to stand upright. When you reach that, you're one-quarter of the way to Underland.
- 6. The Temple of Obsidonus: This minor Dark God has a secret temple in Santa Cora. A forbidden rite of Obsidonus involves magically projecting the minds of his faithful into enchanted obsidian statues that surround his temple deep in the underworld. A band of adventurers with sufficiently strong wills could partake in this rite, then hijack the enchanted statues and go adventuring in sacred golem form. (Good luck getting loot back to the surface, though.)

- 7. The Great Glitterhaegen Drainage Manifold: Glitterhaegen's sewers are hydraulic engineering wonders. The arched, brick vaults and sewage cathedrals go unseen by the merchants and traders who throng the city's streets. The drains go deep—so deep, in fact, they connect to a tunnel that leads down to the underworld. Did the city rulers deliberately construct this access point, or did infiltrators from below bribe some architect to provide them a secret way in?
- 8. Selkies' Lament: Shapeshifting seal-witches haunt this island in the Midland Sea. One dark pool is said to be bottomless; that's not entirely true, there's a bottom, but it's very, very far down. The selkies know a water-breathing spell, though, and they'll share it—for the right price.
- **9.** The Burrow Door: The gnome town of Burrow is safe and tranquil; rampaging monsters from the deep never trouble it. However, there's an entrance to the underworld beneath Burrow. Does this door contain some potent magical ward to repel monsters, or do the gnomes secretly recruit mercenary adventurers to deal with any approaching threats?
- 10. The Words of Moha: A wizard from a past age who became obsessed with the underworld, Moha summoned a mighty earth elemental and bound it to serve him. Whenever he wished to travel to the lands below, he had only to speak a word of command, and the elemental would swim through the soil and carry him down. Moha is (probably) long dead, but his elemental still drags anyone who speaks the words of Moha away into the depths. Unfortunately, the words to *direct* the elemental were lost—only the summoning incantation survived. So, speaking the words of Moha is a one-way and quite random trip
- 11. The Bonecrake Tower Cellar: From the outside, Bonecrake Tower looks like a ruined fortress a kobold tribe took over the sort of minor monster infestation starting adventurers take on to hone their skills after they kill ten rats in the tavern basement. Don't be fooled—that's just what they want you to think! Bonecrake Tower is actually the front line in a surface invasion. The invaders intend to move slowly at first, and spread their influence little by little, until they are ready to challenge the Imperial Legions. The kobolds here are scouts that underworld generals sent up to gather intelligence. Adventurers who try to clear Bonecrake Tower get captured, tied up, and shipped to the underworld for interrogation.
- 12. A Wholly Reliable Tourist's Guide To The Underworld: Was this cursed book created by a whimsical wizard, a malicious genie, or an unusually poetic derro? The Guide purports to be a friendly, reliable handbook to the lands below—it recommends attractions, restaurants, and inns along the way, and advises the traveler on the various cultures' customs and the safest routes. Anyone who reads the book dreams of the underworld—and upon waking, finds themselves in a cave far underground. Soon after, they discover the book is . . . inaccurate.
- **13. That Locked Door in Your Aunt's House:** She never opened or even referred to it, but you remember the cold draughts that blew from beneath the locked door. Once, you heard something like animal snorts and scratching, as

if something behind it was trying to get inside. Now, years later, the door popped back into your memory, and you can't shake the thought of going back to your aunt's house and opening that cryptic door. Come to think of it, she's not actually your aunt, is she?

ABYSSAL MARGINS

The Abyss' opening (13^{th} Age core rulebook, page 260) cuts through Underland. Fortunately for travelers in the lands below, the demons seem mostly constrained to the area around the fiery pit, and don't really rampage down the tunnels. Thank the Great Gold Wyrm, perhaps, since it's the icon working hardest to keep the demons contained.

If the PCs want to get into the Abyss, the underworld offers routes as safe and predictable as the surface world; which is to say, hideously dangerous, unwise, and probably suicidal.

BURROWDEEP WARREΠS

The warrens extend far below the town of Burrow; tunnels link up with Twisp, Oldtown, and Concord, and likely run as far as the domain of the silver folk (page 24). Most of the warrens are as safe as the comfortable surface villages—cozy hidey-holes, cellars stocked with wine and cheese, underground attics crammed with interesting junk—but gnomes and halflings still take tunnel defense quite seriously. Cellar wardens patrol the warrens, just in case kobolds or worse things crawl up from below.

The Burrowdeep warrens' big secret is the *Arcane Academy*—a gnomish school of wizardry. To keep the school secret, graduates are magically bound to never speak of where they learned their craft; a graduate who breaks this oath gets hit with a potent curse. (Each graduating class has a different curse; working out the precise nature of a particular year's curse is always *the* topic of debate at class reunion parties.)



The 13th Age core rulebook described Burrow as one of three bucolic halfling towns, but Gareth is right— Burrow is a splendid name for a town of gnomes. We go with Gar's gnomish Burrow in this book, though, if you wish, there should be plenty of room to include

halflings, too. Maybe the halflings live mostly on the surface and the gnomes live just below?

The Academy's main campus is a series of caves linked by tunnels; for generations, illusionists competed to make each part of the place weirder than the last. One tunnel might seem to swallow travelers whole; another might spit them out at supersonic speeds, while traversing a third may feel like it takes a century of subjective time. The caves are equally bizarre, and change regularly. One day, students in antique fashions attend classes surrounded by marble pillars; the next day, the same cave appears as a crazy kaleidoscope of gemstones and shimmering lights. Magical guardians known as *porters* patrol the Academy to keep the illusions under control. These creatures appear as animated cloaks—hooded and empty—but they're linked by a network that enables them to teleport when needed for reinforcements or emergency assistance. Porters are also utterly immune to illusion, and can only see things as they really are (which makes them frustratingly literal-minded, even by magical construct standards).

The gnomes keep the Academy hidden so it's neither under the Archmage's aegis nor subject to Imperial restrictions on magical research. Most projects at the Arcane Academy are harmless (they have the best illusionists, for example, and treat bardic spellcasting on par with regular wizardry). Still, some more eccentric Academy professors do conduct experiments with items from deep underworld, and one or two have . . . well, one of the useful things about housing your academy in a bunch of caves is that you can wall off a cave and forget about it if an experiment goes wrong and tentacle-y.

Gnomes make up the vast majority of Arcane academics, though there are the occasional halfling necromancer and half-elf sorcerer. While the school hides from the Archmage's attention, it does admit the Elf Queen's influence—and, unfortunately, the Diabolist's, whose cultists teach demonology. There's some debate in the Academy about the possible benefits of opening up links with the Blue's sorcerous minions in Drakkenhall—having the Blue's magical might and authority on board would make the Academy Horizon's equal and allow it to operate openly; but, it might also tip the balance from *amusing gnomish school of prankster illusionists with a few dark secrets* to ... *are we the bad guys*? (And that's *without* speculation about the Calling's influence on some gnomes)

From time to time, the Arcane Academy requires adventurers—usually to obtain rare components or magical samples from the underworld or deal with experiments gone awry. To preserve the school's secrecy, the professors sometimes wipe adventurers' memories after the quest and fill in the gaps with other explanations as to why they are suddenly rich with gnomish gold. If you've ever found a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, inherited a sum of money from a long-lost uncle, or won a talent contest in Twisp, it's entirely possible you *actually* risked your life in a perilous quest into the deep underworld and had your mind wiped afterward.

The Academy's current president is **Monpode Croom**, a dour and somewhat paranoid gnome who's convinced the Archmage is going to blast him with lightning. To avoid electrocution, Croom refuses to go outdoors under any circumstances.

DOMAIN OF THE SILVER FOLK

Beneath the Queen's Wood lies the domain of the silver folk . . . the vault of the drow . . . the realm of the dark elves . . . there are as many names for this place as there are stories about it. Below, we present six gleefully contradictory takes on drowland. Choose the one that best fits your campaign, use the bits you like from each, or assume they're all true of some part or other of the dark elves' sprawling realm. And sprawl it does! The silver folk's influence on the underworld extends beyond the borders of the Queen's Wood in a spidery network of caves, mounds, and secret tunnels. There are certainly secret entrances to the drow realm in Dragonwood and Spiderwood, and even as far south as Drakkenhall. When the dwarves left the underworld, the drow descended—really, they could be anywhere.

DROW STATS

See the Drowfort section in Chapter 4 (page 52) for drow and drider monster stats and a level-by-level table.

WAYS DOWN

How does one get to the domain of the silver folk? Here are some suitably eerie magical options:

- Those ancient mounds that dot the landscape are the halls of the drow. When the dark elves ride forth, magical doorways open in the hillside. Sometimes, if the moon is right or you're blessed with a little magic, you can see them at night. If you're lucky, they might invite you to join in their enchanted feast under the hills; if you're unlucky, they might invite you to be the main course
- When the dark elves want to create a new door to their land, they poison a tree. The tree rots from the inside and becomes hollow. Its roots swell and dig deeper, then they, too, rot from the inside, creating slimy passageways the dark elves can then crawl up to reach the surface. The poison kills other plants, too—if there's a bad harvest or blight, no doubt some mischievous dark elves opened a new door somewhere nearby.
- When the moonlight touches certain enchanted ponds and rivers, they become portals to the lands below. The drow keep these portals secret—they compel any outsider who discovers the location of such a gateway to keep silent. Some drow take hostages to ensure silence (*"you can have your baby back if you keep your word"*), while others are not so forgiving.
- It's all in the spiderwebs. Say the correct words to a spider, and it'll weave a web marked with magical sigils. The dark elves can turn such webs into portals. That's why the drow hang around ruins and haunted woods—more webs mean more doors.
- The dark elves have secret passages *everywhere*. They're the Queen's assassins and commandos—ready to invade the surface at any time, creeping up at night to build new exits from their vaults in places where they might be needed. They're the crew that never rests.



Each of Gareth's ideas about the drow could have campaigns woven in their honor. If your table decides to use any of these ideas, they open new approaches to playing a typical—or uniquely eccentric—dark elf.

The Nightmares Below

The lands of the dark elves are an endless series of torture chambers, slave pens, bizarre rituals or magical experiments, and other such horrors. Each dark elf family specializes in a different dark art—one might consist of master duelists; whereas their neighbors might devote their long lives to creating potent poisons, breeding intelligent spiders, or achieving extraordinary sexual pleasure.

Various servitors carry out mundane tasks—slaves bred in captivity, victims kidnapped from the surface, foes captured in battle, drugged thralls, golems, or mushroom-creatures spawned for a single task and then allowed to rot back into oblivion. There's no such thing as drow peasants in human terms; they're all skilled professionals and aristocrats atop an underclass of servitors.

Each cave-complex belongs to a single family, and they defend their fortress in the middle of the cave with all manner of traps and guardians. Because each family is hyper-specialized, they need each other to survive—a family with a monopoly on demon-summoning might enter into an alliance with a family of mushroom-farmers. Drow society is, therefore, a delicately balanced spiderweb of alliance and debt; however, the only real loyalty is to one's own family and to the Queen. Every so often, a seemingly insignificant change in one family's relationship with another causes a cascade of betrayals that tears the spiderweb to shreds in a bloody civil war.

This hyper-specialization also means the different drow families obsessively compete within their own incredibly narrow fields. Those families that specialize in demon-summoning? They're all expert demonologists. Drow swordsmen can beat any surface warrior in a duel. Drow bards can literally melt or shatter your heart. However, as each family consists of only a few individuals-all driven to obsession and paranoia-the drow can't muster large numbers in any discipline. There can never be an army of drow swordsmen, because when two families of swordsmen get together, they start killing each other. This also leads to incredibly jaded and bizarre tastes-if all your cheesemakers are cheese-obsessed artisans that have competed against each other for generations, each frantically searching for ways to outdo and/or exterminate the other families, you leave humble cheddar far behind and end up with kraken-ink-infused, finely aged, tarrasque mozzarella, or something even more bizarre.

Those unlucky souls who, for one reason or another, can't find a place in their family (the family's numbers grow too large, they have no talent for the family's craft, or their One Unique Thing is not as unique as they think: *I'm the only* good *drow, yes, it's unique. What do you mean, it's been done?*) are exiled to the tunnels that connect the family cave network. These *Ctenzidea* must wander the world as beggars, scavengers, mercenaries, or adventurers until they perish or learn a talent worthy of drow recognition.

For outsiders, the dark elf caverns are a cavalcade of horrors. One cave is inhabited by a clan of sculptors whose work is so delicate that the statues come to life when you breathe on them (the drow prefer statues of monstrous hybrids and dying warriors, so these *living statues* perish over and over again). Escape that cave, and the next one is full of drow lawyers whose arguments are so fine they can impale you with a perfectly reasoned point, then use you as a living inkwell to sign contracts in blood. Flee that cave, and enter a chamber ruled by a family of vintners whose grapes are grown on corpse-vines. And, if you manage to escape *that* horror-show, the three families might band together and contract with a fourth, trading statues and wine to call in the best underworld hunters to catch you and bring you back

Drow and The Calling

While the drow in the underworld do seem creepier, why is it that they don't seem any crazier than those you'd encounter on the surface?

There are two possibilities. The first is that you can never really tell with drow. They are always just a little more sketchy than other elves. While other elves and non-drow adventurers wander off and never come back if they spend too long in the underworld, the drow just shrug and keep on with whatever they were doing. Maybe the magic of the Elf Queen protects them. Maybe they're well adapted to the underworld environment.

The other option is that drow who handle the deep underworld poorly *do* change. They could become something akin to the Briar Elves (*13th Age Bestiary 2*, page 22). Why didn't you know that already? Because the drow ruthlessly police themselves, and cull those that succumb to this form of evil. To succeed in the underworld, the drow may make the sort of hard choices the Dwarf King is unwilling to force on his own people.

The Halls of the Silver Folk

The drow dwell in great, sad halls beneath the hills. Ancient and cruel, beautiful and terrible, they are a people of ash and tarnished silver. The drow were the first elven civilization to flower, the first folk to walk the forests in days of old. They accomplished great deeds, built glorious cities above and below, and learned the world's secrets many ages before the Wizard King arose.

All things must end, though. All flowers wither, all great deeds are forgotten, all cities crumble—but, not all secrets are forgotten. The drow that exist today are the last dregs of their fallen civilization. Other elven peoples are but offshoots of the dark elves. Their cousins, the wood elves, chose to be childlike and forgot their sorrow in song, dance, and the green world; the high elves are drow in denial—they refuse to accept that their civilization is dying, looking to the stars for some sign of rebirth or some sorcery that can turn back the wheel of time.

So, the halls of the silver folk are incredibly beautiful, astoundingly vast, and terribly, terribly empty. Very few drow remain—a trespasser might wander these ruined palaces for days and not encounter another living soul. There are temples

to forgotten gods, machines that have slumbered for ages, and labyrinthine libraries whose books turned to dust long ago.

The remaining drow still command their ancestors' mighty magics and artifices—the name *silver folk* refers to their love of magical silver, which they once used to make tools and weapons beyond the skill of any other smiths in the world. Many drow sport artificial limbs or masks made of silver; others forged silver golems, flying ships, and other wonders. They also made many mirrors, but avoided gazing into them—afraid to reveal their long decline. Not much of this magical silver remains, and the drow cannot make more.

Outsiders may call them cruel; however, the drow say they suffered greater losses than anyone can imagine, and any suffering they inflict to alleviate the boredom of their slow decline is nothing compared to the sorrow they feel at seeing their empire end. Sometimes, they can muster jealousy at the younger races, who still have a future to which they can look forward. (That said, the ancient drow were also cruel in their power and glory. Dim folk-memories of the ancient drow empire and the atrocities the elves perpetrated on the latecomers contribute to the dark elves' bad reputation today.)

THE QUEEN'S REFUGE

The drow are the Elf Queen's secret police. Their scattered mounds are magical listening posts and scrying stations, where they spy on the movements of the surface folk. Messengers creep through secret tunnels to report back to the secret drow fortress under the Queen's Wood.

The caves of the silver folk are a subterranean citadel with endless corridors; elaborate archives, where they collate and track the world's stolen whispers; and huge underground storehouses, armories, magical wards, and research facilities. There are underground forests, too; as well as seed vaults, cryogenic chambers for woodland animals, petrified dryads in deep storage, and faeries frozen like a billion tiny snowflakes.

Why? Because the elves *remember*. The immortal Elf Queen has seen many, many ages come and go—and she knows that every age ends in catastrophe. The drow vaults are her insurance policy—her survival bunker against the next Armageddon. The mission of every drow spy and watcher is to watch for signs and portents that the 13th age is coming to an end. If they discover a potential age-ending catastrophe, they can use whatever rough, cruel methods they need to avert disaster—but, if they fail, then at least the elves won't perish. The Court of Stars can descend into the underworld, take refuge here in the vault of the drow,



and wait out the destruction of the surface world. Even if the age ends in fire and all the forests burn—they can be regrown. Everything the elves need to remake the world anew exists in the vault of the drow. They've done it before.

It's rare for trespassers to get too far into the Queen's Refuge. The place is a fortress, designed to survive a siege by age-ending monsters and the invading hosts of the Orc Lord/Lich King/ Crusader/whomever turns out to be the world's doom.



See the nymph entry in the 13th Age Bestiary 2 (page 202) for a compatible take on elven secrets. Bring the nymphs down to the underworld, reflavor them as drow, or make the drow their secret masters.

Viderwood

Underwood is an upside-down, negative-image forest, surreal in its beauty. Black roots from the Queen's Wood above dangle into this vast cavern, twining into pseudo-trunks. The foliage in this strange wood are silver webs; the elves make their way across the inverted floor on spider-back. Underwood's undergrowth is a fungal bloom of exotic mushrooms, cultivated for their hallucinogenic, medicinal, poisonous, magical, or aggressively carnivorous properties.

The upside-down sky is a vast bowl of night-black marble, studded with crystals that gleam like stars. These *stars* are potent magical tools—lethally dangerous to the unwary. Close proximity to a crystal star can burn, mutate, enchant, or otherwise distort anyone who doesn't wear the right protective shielding. (The dark elves just send in disposable minions when they need to adjust the stars.) Some stars gather and channel magical energy, others are attuned to places of power both above and below; the elves use the latter as warning beacons—if a fiery star in the southern firmament suddenly grows brighter, the Red is on his way. Still other stars contain encysted demons, mined and shaped into stars for cryptic reasons.

Just as Underwood reflects the surface forest, the dark elves are a twisted reflection of surface elves. Most dark elves you'll encounter here are wood elf counterparts. The dark elf version of high elves—called deep elves—dwell in obsidian towers that rise like gnarled fingers from Underwood's forests. They're pale and bald, with eyes like lamps and ears like bat-wings. In their towers, they brew poisons and spells unknown to the surface world.

THE BITTER PLACE

To be a dark elf is to be cast out of the Elf Queen's presence and denied access to the forests above. Dark elves are not born; they are *sentenced*.

The dark elves' tunnels run just beneath the surface, almost touching the sunlit world. Sometimes, the dark elves crowd into these secret passageways to spy on their cousins through innumerable hidden peep-holes and apertures, pressing their ears to the stone to hear the wood elves laughing and dancing in the glades above. You see, the exiled dark elves are consumed by bitter jealousy. They cannot experience joy or merriment for themselves, but they can recognize it in others. They spy on their cousins and other surface folk with all-consuming envy, and they dig their spy-tunnels so they can listen in as honest villagers feast in the local inn, dwarven opera-singers entertain the crowds in Forge, and children play in the shadow of the Cathedral in Santa Cora.

When they can bear their jealousy no longer, they slink down into the depths to the cavern called the Bitter Place, where they drown their sorrows with mushroom wine and pull off spiders' legs. A dark elf citadel, the Bitter Place is a prison where the inmates are also the guards—all the dark elves crave is to return to the surface, so they watch each other and punish anyone who dares question the Elf Queen's commands.

Some dark elves wear silver masks of pride. When called to the surface, they walk haughtily, sneering at the other elves as though they don't miss sunlight on the trees, or laughter, or pleasure that is not mixed with pain. They hide their sorrow, but even the most arrogant drow hide a core of deep and abiding shame.

It's exceedingly rare, but not impossible, for the Elf Queen to forgive a dark elf. Usually, she gives her blessing to those who perish in her service—when an elite drow commando perishes while fighting fearful odds, the elf dies as a wood elf or high elf, not a dark elf. Only a handful have ever won forgiveness and returned from the Bitter Place

CAVERNS OF THE DRUG FIENDS

There are rivers of wine, trees made of chocolate, and spun sugar flowers in the underground palaces of the silver folk. Drow of surpassing beauty offer themselves freely, seeking only pleasure in return. Living spells prowl like housecats through the crowds of silver revelers, pressing against skin until they find a receptive brain to curl up in. Drug-spiders scuttle by, their fangs dripping with the most fabulous narcotics. Duelists, high on the rare dark elf potions, slash at each other with swords until they are both dismembered and laughing uproariously on the cavern floor. From another cavern comes wild music, wild dancing, wild abandon . . .

OR

These are dark caves with ordure on the floors. The dark elves lie in oppressive silence, slumped against the walls; or, they stand listlessly, eyes blank and unseeing. Every few hours, one of them crawls across the cave to an outcrop of mushrooms and takes another mouthful of the silvercap fungus that is both food and god to these poor wretches. The delightful hallucinations the drug causes are so intense they brought the dark elf civilization to an end many ages ago; the Elf Queen's charity is the only thing keeping these last few drow alive. She uses the addicted elves as her shock troops—they'll do anything and fight anyone for another fix of silvercap. Don't stay in these caves too long, or the spores will infect you . . .

OR

These polished, glass caves are bubbling tanks tended by dark elf alchemists—their faces hidden behind silver breathing masks. There are cages and gardens where they extract poisons from spiders, scorpions, plants, and fungi; and laboratories where they culture and refine their venoms into the subtlest of drugs. Everything is just a chemical reaction in the brain: emotion, memory, thought, even magic. Drink this vial, and you'll feel undying loyalty to the Elf Queen. Drink that one, and you'll remember you're a dark elf, and your previous existence on the surface was just a dream. Drink a third, and the spells crawl into your brain. Oh, and this one? It creates the false memory that you're in a weird, high-tech laboratory being brainwashed by a dark elf....

DWARVEN MINES

The Dragon Empire claimed some abandoned dwarven mines near the surface, and human miners tapped out the dregs of iron, gold, jewels, and other rare minerals. When the dwarves abandoned Underhome and migrated *en masse* to the surface, the Empire handed these mines back to the dwarves.

The dwarves turned some of the mines into clan fortresses they fortified tunnels, barred entrances with gates of steel, and took up residence with their families in the old mineshafts. These clans tend to be quite insular; some lurked in the mountains for centuries with next to no contact with the lands below.

Technically, these mines aren't part of the Empire—they're under the Dwarf King's rule. This means human outlaws fleeing Imperial justice can seek sanctuary in the mines, beyond the reach of Imperial law. Of course, living in a dwarven mine means you'll do hard labor for your supper; so, unless your crime is a really awful one, dwarven sanctuary may be more of a punishment than a refuge.

Other mines—as described in the 13th Age core rulebook (page 265)—have magically regenerated in recent years. The most common belief is the rise of a new High Druid rejuvenated the land, causing it to bear fruit. Clearly, a magical wave of bountiful blessings is rising across the Empire, bringing a decade of glorious harvests and wealth that will start any day now.

Of course, if they knew what was happening in those rejuvenated mines, they wouldn't be quite so enthusiastic. Indeed, the mines are rejuvenated, but the magic also draws or conjures monsters and weird elemental outbreaks. The isolated dwarven communities are hard-pressed to work the rejuvenated mines *and* fight off subterranean monsters, and they fear that if they turn to the Empire for aid, the Empire will reclaim the mines. So, they either rely on help from distant Forge (page 29), or hire local adventurers to go in and clear out the perils.

13 Troubles Down at d'Mine

- 1. Giant insects made of solid gemstone scuttle around in the darkness, devouring adventurers with their many-faceted mandibles.
- 2. The lower mineshafts are dimensionally unstable and prone to warp miners deep into the underworld—or back in time.
- 3. Toxic gases (or geases) in the mines infect all who inhale them with an obsessive love of gold, even by dwarven standards. The adventurers must enter the mine and rescue

the afflicted miners without killing them.

- The mine is a giant living dungeon, or a carnivorous cave with lots of sparkly bits. The dwarven mine owners are either mind-controlled, or are scavengers who intend to steal the adventurers' gear when the monster spits up their remains.
- 5. There's a bountiful vein of uranium here.
- 6. Those petrified chuul eggs look just like gemstones . . . until you hit 'em with an axe.
- 7. This rejuvenated mine produced an astronomical quantity of gold; it will crash the Imperial economy if exploited. The mine must be destroyed to avoid complete currency devaluation. Elven currency speculators oppose this, because they have stock in the Elf Queen's trines.
- 8. Gold and gemstones found in this mine are actually grave goods; the mineshaft crosses an underworld migration of mummy sarcophagi that swim through the soil under the Lich King's direction.
- 9. The dwarves salted the mine's gems, intending to "grudgingly" sell the mine to the highest bidder; the monsters are also salted. Adventurers—assaulted.
- 10. The mine is ground zero for a massive eruption of elemental energy, resulting in the manifestation of a bunch of earth elementals. Where the earth energy meets the surface world's mundane matter, it condenses into gemstones that form a natural cap on the eruption. Remove the gems and, well, kaboom.
- 11. The mine is a chrysalis for an entity from the overworld, a gigantic butterfly/dragon/sky god-thing. The gemstones are flakes from the cocoon. If it hatches prematurely, it'll turn into a grotesque maggot, polluted by the profane surface world. And butterfly/dragon/sky goddess-mommy will be *annoyed*.
- 12. The dwarves dug too deep and freed something from another age (encysted demon, slumbering serpent man, sorcerer somewhat surprised by suspension of supernatural snooze, flying saucer).
- 13. The mine isn't the issue—escorting the dwarven treasure ship is the issue. This mighty flotilla visits the various mines once per year, then carries gold and silver back to Forge across the Midland Sea. Every year, pirates, dragons, privateers from rival cities, and all manner of other wouldbe thieves target the shipment.

FALLEΠ SŤAR CAVERΠS

A flying realm from the overworld crashed here, wedged itself deep into the ground and became thoroughly stuck. These caves are full of weird overworld creatures—storm giants and couatls and the like. They're also wracked by earthquakes, as the caves attempt to rip themselves free of their earthly prison and return to the skies.

The Fallen Star Caverns count as part of the overworld for abilities like the wizard's Overworld Advantage talent. Be careful, though—the magical pressure differential between the overworld and the underworld makes for arcane weirdness and instability along the boundary zones.

The Murder Halls

Oh, you'll love the murder halls. We all live in the murder halls. Well, not live, exactly. Not all. No, some of us live in the murder halls, where we make clever traps with knives and spikes and wheels... and did I mention the knives, so sharp and pretty in the dark? Yes, yes. We love the murder halls. Some of us live in the murder halls, and everyone else dies in the murder halls. Come to the murder halls, we'll see which sort of thing you are.

-a derro speaks

FORGE: CİTY OF MEMORIALS

The mountain city of Forge was first wrought in the golden age of the dwarves, when the Dwarf King ruled from the fabled Throne Under The Mountain. That's an entirely different mountain, mind you—back then, Forge was just one far-flung outpost of the vast kingdom below. The volcanic fires at the heart of Forge were still hot, then, and enterprising smiths and rune-crafters used the elemental magic to shape wonders—and weapons. During the war with the elves, Forge was a secret foundry for weapons. Some stories suggest the Dwarf King intended to use Forge to launch an attack on the elven woods on the surface, catching the dark elves in a pincer from both above and below.

Then came the disastrous fall of the kingdom below. As poisons eliminated the dwarven cities below, the survivors climbed toward the surface and scattered across the lands above. The Dwarf King and his retinue headed to Anvil, the trading town, but feared they could not defend it against the elves and kept going, eventually stopping at Forge. As a military outpost, Forge was too cramped to cope with all the refugees from below; so, the dwarves began to feverishly build and expand the outpost. Today, there's relatively little actual *mountain* left—Forge is more of a mountain-shaped city.

Even as they worked, the dwarves never forgot that this was just a temporary arrangement, a brief setback. "One day," they told one another, "when the poison clears and the strength of the dwarves is restored, we will march back down and reclaim our lost kingdom." For a time, every newly-built corridor and chamber in Forge was carved with statues, friezes, or other monuments to the lost world of Underhome; however, the dwarves no longer carve such memorials. More recent edifices in Forge bear images of the sun, trees, the sky, clouds and other surface-world things. The volcano-forges at the heart of Forge have grown cold; so, too, has the burning desire in dwarven hearts to retake the kingdom below.

But, that fire can be stoked once more—a dwarf has only to look at the walls of Forge to remember what was lost.

A Mercifully Brief History of the Dwarves

If you desire a much, much longer history, complete with mournful singing, epic poetry, lots of drinking, and traditionally—some ill-advised oaths to set out on a quest to reclaim what was lost... ask any dwarf to tell you the sad tale.

Long ago, all dwarves dwelt in the underworld, in their great and peerless kingdom—perhaps the wealthiest and most powerful nation in all the lands. Then, there was a war between the dwarves and elves (some say just the dark elves, some say all elves). During this conflict, a poison or magical plague was accidentally released. Many dwarves perished, and their enemies took advantage of the kingdom's sudden vulnerability to attack it from all sides. The few surviving dwarves were forced to flee to the surface, where the Dwarf King established a new kingdom in exile at Forge.

Defenses

Most who arrive in Forge come from Anvil, though they typically travel along the Undermarch tunnels, below. There, Forge's defenses are obvious to even human eyes—no one could miss the gigantic steel-and-bronze gates, girded with runes of power and bound in adamantine. Massive cables and cogs allow the gates to quickly slam shut; once closed, it's said they could withstand any force—even the Red's fiery breath (it should be noted the dwarves haven't actually *tested* that claim).

Forge's surface defenses are less obvious. The mountainside is steep and dangerous in places, but it doesn't have any obvious massive walls surrounding it. It would seem invaders—such as the Orc Lord's armies—could just walk up to Forge's exterior and enter through any of a thousand doorways. However, there are three important things to note: first, the mountain passes around Forge are wild and almost impassable unless you're a mountain goat. Second, the dwarves have sown traps, magical wards, secret forts, and other perils on this ground for centuries (of course, they assumed they'd be fighting elves; but, honestly, the hidden spear trap that impales the goose can also skewer the orc). Third, none of the surface buildings are especially important to the city's function—so, please, invader, come right in through that open door. It's well-known that dwarves *hate* tunnel fighting

Indeed, Forge's most elaborate defenses are intended to protect the city against an attack from below. The city's underside is a maze of choke-gates, listening posts, murder-pits, and other traps; and potent magical wards protect against living dungeons and other arcane threats.

Dwarves are generally a bit paranoid about thieves and invaders; they enjoy the feeling of security that comes from having lots of traps, secret passageways, and arsenals near at hand. Additionally, nearly every home and business in Forge has a cupboard full of axes, a pit trap under the front door, and a secret room stuffed with iron rations and other emergency supplies.



13 Customs in Forge

You can't tell a dwarf what to do . . . unless, of course, your name is Custom or Tradition!

- 1. The Memory of Underhome: A solemn, week-long festival that commemorates the lost dwarven homeland, the war that brought about its ending, and the poisonous vapors that consumed it. During the sacred week, dwarves leave offerings and hold rituals at shrines to their ancestors, and tell tales of the lost land below. When it comes time to remember the death of Underhome, everyone wears ceremonial masks and the priests walk the streets with censers that spew clouds of foul, violet smoke. Elves are advised to steer clear of Forge on this week—the combination of masked faces and short tempers often turns lethal.
- 2. Running the Dragon's Head: In ages past, it was the custom each year for a band of dwarven adventurers to go out, slay a dragon, and parade its head around Forge as a warning to any other wyrms who coveted the Dwarf King's treasures. (Some years, they substituted the head of a lesser monster, or reused an old dragon head; but, a fresh dragon's head was believed to bring good luck to the city). When the Blue joined the Empire, the Dwarf King outlawed the ritual, out of respect. Despite this edict, though, the Running still takes place—traditionalists smuggle in a head and then sprint through the streets, attempting to complete the rite before the guards catch them.
- 3. Not the Empire: Forge is *NOT* one of the Seven Cities of the Dragon Empire. It's not part of the Dragon Empire *AT ALL*,

and the Emperor has no authority here. AND THEY'RE NOT TOUCHY ABOUT IT, EVER. Many dwarven merchants refuse to take Imperial currency, and pride themselves on never, ever using Imperial titles or honorifics. "You might be the Archmage down south, lad, but this is Forge. Things are different here."

- 4. Foambeard Night: This annual festival of misrule is a chance for stoic dwarves to cut loose. It's tradition to assume everyone is blind drunk on Foambeard Night, so anything you say or do can be chalked up to inebriation. The city guards keep a lid on trouble; so, the day is mostly about giving the dwarves a chance to say how they really feel without fear of embarrassment or censure. It's a night for declarations of love, for the venting of spleens, and for oaths and grand gestures. Should anyone wish to disavow anything they did or said the following day, they need only complain of a hangover—custom dictates that no one ever speak of it again.
- 5. Alloy Humors: Dwarven physicians believe that the body's concentrations of certain minerals and metals dictate personality. An excess of iron makes someone strong-willed, but cruel; too little iron leads to lethargy and softness. Coal makes the blood hot, mercury imparts inspiration and revelation, and silver controls self-image—too much silver leads to vanity, too little leads to unkempt hair and filth. Metallurgists study and counsel patients; they're remarkably good at making psychological assessments, but their remedies are often problematic for non-dwarves: *"Take two teaspoons of granite dust and call me in the morning."*
- 6. Ancestor Cults: The dwarves worship their ancestors, and some of the ancestors have become minor gods—nosy, interfering gods who take far too much interest in their descendants' lives. For a dwarf from one of these families, divine revelations are an annoying part of life, and tend to be about frustratingly trivial matters—the heavens open, holy light blazes down from the overworld, and a divine voice booms: "aren't you married yet? What's wrong with you? You're not getting any younger, you know."
- 7. Listeners, Runecasters, and Pongomancers: All popular dwarven forms of divination, runecasters throw knucklebones marked with runes and read their meaning; pongomancers trace your future in your beard hairs; and listeners are mystics who sit perfectly still and unmoving for years at a time. People squat down next to listeners and whisper secrets in their ears; if a listener responds (an exceedingly rare event), one can read the future in the twitch of the listener's brow or the wrinkling of their nose.
- 8. Armed Assayers: The Dwarf King claims all treasure from the underworld—and he's determined to have his due. Armed assayers target anyone coming to Forge who might plausibly carry loot from the underworld (adventurers, usually). These black-clad agents of the King sneak in at night to test magical items for traces of underworld arcane radiation, chip off samples of precious metals and gemstones, and sniff your boots for traces of cave mold. If they find proof that you took treasure from the underworld, they report you to the King.

- **9.** The Song of Stone: An almost imperceptible vibration runs through Forge, generated by huge steam-hammers in the depths of the city. Dwarves can feel it through the soles of their feet, and have learned to read changes in the Song. It works much like a town crier: dwarves receive news about Forge throughout the day via these vibrations. A whole crowd of dwarves might all burst into laughter simultaneously, or cheer, or weep, depending on what the Song said. It can look disconcertingly like telepathy (or an outbreak of mass psychosis) to outsiders who can't understand the Song of Stone.
- 10. Guard Pillars: Guard posts—fat pillars of polished black stone—are everywhere in Forge. At any given time, a guard—or a dozen guards, or none—might be inside the pillar, watching and listening through concealed openings. Secret doors, internal stairways, and passages let the guards move around these surveillance architectures without being seen. Visitors accustomed to the anonymity other cities offer may find Forge oppressive and sinister—especially because humans and elves literally stand out in the crowds here.
- 11. Cave Pigs: Dwarven settlements, even those in the underworld, keep huge, pale pigs as living garbage disposals. It's forbidden to kill or even injure a pig; indeed, dwarves insist everyone respect the pigs and treat them kindly. If a pig sits down in the middle of the road, take another route. If a pig eats a spellbook, it's clear the wizard should be more careful with his things.
- 12. Squaregangs and Topplegangs: Indolence and idleness are anathema to dwarves—everyone must keep busy. The city pays dwarves with no other task a small amount of coin to clean and maintain the city. This is called the King's Square (after the square tower-coins used by the dwarves); hence, groups of these casual laborers are known as Squaregangs. Much of their work involves repairing mischief caused by Topplegangs—bands of dwarven ruffians and troublemakers that go abroad at night to smash and vandalize things at random. It's an open secret a Squaregang in one district might sneak out at night to Topplegang in another, while their neighbors return the favor—ensuring there's plenty of work for all the next day. During times of war, Squaregangs become the city's militia.
- **13. The Stone King:** One of the strangest dwarven traditions is that of the Dwarf King as merely a figurehead or illusion. The devotees of the Stone King theory hold that the *true* icon is a stone golem or divinely animated stone statue that has ruled the dwarves in secret since the dawn of time. Every Dwarf King is a servant of this eternal, undying statue—and any statue in Forge could be the true king!

Districts

No one uses north, south, east, or west—or even left and right to give directions within Forge itself. Rather, everything is *in* (toward the mountain's heart) or *out* (toward the surface), and *up*, *down*, *clockwise*, or *counter-clockwise* around Forge's perimeter.

Undertown

This is where the Undermarch enters into the city; it is home to endless markets, shops, taverns, traders, and thieves. The district sprawls out south (we can say that, since we're not dwarves in Forge) of the mountain and below the surface (which leads to the confusing area known as *Overundertown*—it makes more sense in dwarvish!) Though this district has the highest number of non-dwarves, few are permanent residents—humans and elves who live in Forge tend to cluster in Outsky. Despite the city elders' best efforts, Undertown is a raucous bazaar at the best of times. They manage to keep the main thoroughfares sober and properly dwarven, but if you stray from the main street, you'll quickly end up in a drinking contest, a gambling den, or a wrestling match— or all three.

Several Glitterhaegen guilds have embassies or tradinghouses here, cementing the long association between Glitterhaegen and Forge. The Prince of Shadows also has agents here. If the Orc Lord's legions get to Forge, they'll likely invade Undertown first. Panic and wild rumors spread through the bazaar with alarming speed, and the authorities worry about riots as the war draws closer.

Notable figures in the district include:

- Brilda Breakpillar: As head of the Undertown city watch, she's responsible for keeping order in the most volatile part of the city. Brilda is always stressed, always angry about something, and always in need of one or more of the following: adventurers who can solve problems, something she can hit hard, or coffee. There's a large price on her head, though it's not clear who put out the hit.
- Angrom the Trader: An old, dwarven smith who runs a weapons shop near Forge's entrance. His army of nephews and nieces do the actual smith work; Angrom just runs the shop. He knows more about adventuring—especially about unexplored dungeons—than anyone else alive.
- Good Old Stephan: Stephan earned his nickname with an act of heroism so renowned, the dwarves made him an honorary citizen. It doesn't hurt that he's sincerely honest and wellintentioned. In your campaign, you can decide whether his heroism came at the expense of a specific dwarven enemy. Good Old Stephan operates a handful of inns in Undertown, aimed at housing travelers coming up the Undermarch.
- **Guildmistress Aza:** An emissary from Glitterhaegen, Aza is a highly influential player in Forge politics—easily irritated by anything that might upset trade. She often hires deniable adventurers to resolve such issues.

Ringing Towers

You'll find smiths and crafters of all sorts in the Ringing Towers, which reverberate with hammer clangs and market hubbub. It's a byword for dull, dwarven diligence, the sort of place where a dwarf could spend two centuries mastering the art of forging one particular type of belt-buckle—but, for some reason, the Diabolist's agents purchased a house in the middle of this district. What she intends to do with her House of Hell remains a mystery for now—although there are whispers that it's somehow connected to the Assayers' secret headquarters located somewhere in this district.

Notable figures in the district include:

• Master Smith Veigr: The Lord of Ringing Towers, Veigr is obsessed with unusual metals. He might trade one of his fabled weapons for ore from the underworld's depths.

OLD FORGE

The oldest of the city districts, certain sections of Old Forge are sealed away—only accessible with the Dwarf King's permission. It's rumored these vaults hold weapons and artifacts forged for the end of days, and they'll only be used when doom comes to the city. The rest of Old Forge, though, is a warren of quiet side streets and humble homes. It's a district of scribes and artists, who write books in Armageddon's shadow.

Notable figures in the district include:

• Keylech the Unstable: An eccentric dwarven wizard, Keylech says dwarven wizards should attune to the underworld, not the overworld. She also believes subterranean magics are more in tune with dwarven sensibilities. So far, her zeal manifests as localized gravitational weirdness, but a few former students fear Keylech might *go derro* if she pushes her experiments too far.

Godstone

Godstone is the temple quarter at the heart of the city, just clockwise of Old Forge. It's not unusual to see ancestral shrines or soldiers with the mark of the Crusader in this district. The dwarves follow traditions brought out of the underworld; they worship the Light Gods (and a few of the Dark). The twin high priests, **Urmar** and **Abmar**, oversee the rites and exchange roles once a year.

Godstone is also home to several large breweries—the dwarves believe you can find visions of the divine in ales prepared with the correct herbs and mushrooms. The priests struggle to keep the tombs of the dead below Godstone free of graverobbers, necromancers, servants of the Lich King, undead, and mushroom-cultists who seek to cultivate fungi from the honored corpses.

Ουτςκά

Outsky is the Forge's surface district. The winds that whip off the Frost Range this far up in the mountains are bitterly cold, so the towers have thick walls and many chimneys. Outsky is a city of stairways that wind around and around the steep mountain sides—roads run south to the farms around Foothold, and north to the hunting estates and army camps along the Koru Valleys.

Notable figures in the district include:

- **Gulthun Icewalker:** A veteran adventurer, Gulthun the halforc has visited the lowest reaches of the underworld and the heights of the overworld. He has slain dragons, fought living dungeons, and walked the burning plains of hell—and buried more comrades than he can count. Now retired, he lives in a villa on the northern slopes of Outsky. From there, he watches the horizon, waiting for the Orc Lord's banner to appear over the rise. He's got one last fight left in him, and it's going to be a great one.
- Idris of the Northern Arcanium: The relationship between the Archmage and the Dwarf King is frosty at best, but the Archmage's emissary, Idris, manages to smooth over many of their disagreements. She runs a satellite school and research facility in Outsky—a little piece of Horizon, way up in the barbarous peaks. Clever and silver-tongued, Idris has ambitions beyond Forge. If she masters lost magics from the

underworld, she stands a chance of *becoming* the Archmage someday.

• **Prince Elidamar:** The title may be self-appointed—Elidamar claims to be the Elf Queen's son, but no one is certain that's true. He claims he is in self-imposed exile from the Court of Stars, and it's certain he's a wanted criminal in elven lands. The Dwarf King keeps him around to annoy the Elf Queen; Elidamar is a high elf, but he has more friends among the dark elves than among his close kin.

HIGH HALLS

Forge's topmost district—the High Halls contain palaces, archives, armories, and watchtowers. They're best known for the Dragongate, a fortress made to repel a dragon assault. Often shrouded in mist, it's possible there's a secret skydock for flying realms hidden up there in the clouds.

THE SQUARES

Similar to the Ringing Towers, but somewhat poorer, the Squares are a district of laborers seething with political dissent revolution is in the air. Some argue the Dwarf King's fabulous wealth should be spent, not hoarded; others say it's high time they reclaim the underworld and leave the surface. The latter argues the Emperor tricked the Dwarf King into fighting the Orc Lord, and they should let the Orc Lord pass by unscathed to lay waste to the Dragon Empire, the elves, or whomever else he wants to smash.

Stories about derro attacks—or dwarves turning into derro and taking over whole sections of the Square—are categorically untrue; you should report anyone who repeats such wild tales to the city guards.

GREAT CELLAR

Miners exhausted the veins of iron and gold beneath Forge, so the mines are now vast storehouses. Some caves are used to farm pigs, mushrooms, and other foodstuffs; others are crammed full of supplies. Tunnels lead off under the mountain to more distant mines—the forges are ever-hungry for ore, and the dwarves must toil further and further away from their ancestors' halls. Other mine branches were sealed off after they became infested with monsters.

THE CITADEL

The Citadel is a huge military fortress. How big? No one really knows. It's not just one underground fort, though; it's at least four. Sections of the Citadel adjoin or intertwine with the High Halls, the Ringing Towers, Old Forge, and Godstone—via tunnels that don't connect with the rest of the city. The citadel could very well take up half the mountain or extend for miles under the earth, for all the civilian dwarves know. You'll always hear digging sounds if you listen to the walls of Forge.

Note: The Last Door (page 21) is part of the Citadel.

THE DWARF KING'S COURT

The Dwarf King is a king in exile. His throne and kingdom are lost in the underworld, waiting for the right time to be reclaimed. Even though the dwarves have lived on the surface for many ages, Forge is but a temporary residence. The Dwarf King's court—located in what was once a massive foundry—reflects this temporary, *ad-hoc* status. The throne stands amid titanic furnaces; chains and hooks hang from the distant ceiling; and courtiers mingle and conspire in the shadows cast by crucibles and vats of congealed metal.

However, over the centuries, craftsmen and artisans beautified the court to befit a king—the furnace and vats are now gilded, marked with runes of power, and decorated with statues of dwarven gods. Delicate carvings that seem to move in the torchlight now inscribe the congealed metal. Hammers and tongs discarded ages ago by some forgotten craftsmen became relics, now ornamented with gold and jewels.

The throne room is many things: a showcase for dwarven smithcraft; an expression of the Dwarf King's wealth; a testament to the sheer, stubborn blood-mindedness of dwarves; and a declaration that one day, the dwarves will go home again.

Notable figures in the district include:

- Ambassador Jharna: An ambassador from the Dragon Empire, some speculate Jharna is a secret member of the Golden Order, or even a polymorphed gold dragon. Certainly, she's a vital link between Axis and Forge. The alliance against the Orc Lord rests on her slim shoulders.
- Lord Dvalin of Clan Dvalin: Immeasurably ancient, Dvalin swore he would die in Underhome, and he has no intention of perishing until he returns. His is the strongest—or at least the most peevish—voice pushing for reconquest of the underworld.
- Lady Hammerhand of Clan Brakir: Lady Hammerhand is... or was... one of the best dwarven generals. Clan Brakir's armies are on the front line against the Orc Lord's hordes. One year ago, Lady Hammerhand was struck by a poisoned spear. Her troops carried her back to Forge, and brought her to the houses of healing in Godstone. Her wounds were so terrible, the priests prayed for divine intervention. Their prayers were answered—but no one is sure exactly what power responded. Hammerhand is back at court—her skin pale as porcelain, her eyes dark as onyx, and her voice a deathly rattle. Is she sick? Shattered by her ordeal? Possessed? Undead? The army clamors for their champion to return to the fray, and it would damage morale if the Dwarf King refused to let her return. However, it would be much more devastating if they discovered she was tainted or monstrous.

13 Rumors in Forge

- 1. They brew a magical ale in Godstone, made with underworld fungi. Any dwarf who drinks it receives the power to cast spells—for as long as they remain drunk.
- 2. Forge's great vulnerability is *hunger*. Most of the city's food supplies come up the Undermarch from the Empire. The city's own farms can't supply anywhere near enough. If some enemy blocks the Undermarch, then Forge would have to rely on its stockpiles to feed the population until the siege is lifted—and those stockpiles are infested with giant rats. Really *smart* rats.
- 3. The Dwarf King's working on a way to make new dwarves out of stone, or grow them in vats—that's the big secret they hide in the Citadel. The derro were a prototype that escaped.
- 4. There's a secret code that uses different beard-braids to send messages. Only Forge-born dwarves know the lingo.

- 5. The whole city's rigged to fly. They're building magical engines down in the Deeps. When this age ends, Forge will take off and become a flying weapon. The Dwarf King remembers the last war, and won't be caught again.
- 6. There are other dwarven colonies across the world, founded by other refugees from Underhome. They're secretly in communication with the Dwarf King—when the orcs come, the dwarves will send reinforcements from across the sea.
- 7. Forge is rife with secret societies—the Underhome Reclamation League, the Clock Keepers, the Square Men, the Master Masons. The city's one bad night away from civil war, and the Dwarf King's real job is keeping a lid on all these intrigues.
- 8. There's a smith down in Ringing Towers who makes talking weapons—but no one understands the language they're speaking.
- 9. The dwarves carried the poison out of the underworld with them. It builds up over time in the dust, and when it reaches a critical level, everyone exposed to it goes mad. The dwarves keep building new sections of the city and sealing off old ones to keep the poison levels under control.
- 10. There's a tavern in Undertown that serves a magical brew that turns anyone who drinks it into a dwarf.
- 11. Remember Clan Hrildr? The ones who got wiped out by lizardman assassins? Well, the Hrildr-clan ancestral god is still around, which means there must be a Hrildr left somewhere in the world to carry on the line. Want a god to owe you a favor? Find that dwarf.
- 12. Forge is full of chimneys and air vents—it's such a tangle that no one is quite sure where all the tubes go or what's going on in there. Sooty footprints near the fireplace, strange high-pitched laughter behind the chimney breast—is there something living in the vents? What could survive in all that smoke and toxic fumes?
- 13. The capering jester in the Dwarf King's court? The one who wears a pig mask? He's a derro. The King uses him to communicate with the derro below.

GOROGAП'S İППARDS

Everyone on the surface knows to avoid the mountain-sized petrified demon (See Gorogan's Maw, *13th Age* core rulebook, page 269). After all, demons that spawn in the beast's interior often spill out onto the surface. For those brave enough to fight their way past the demons, though, the Maw offers a quick route down. Underland bisects Gorogan's torso, and holes bored into its belly offer ways out of the demon into the tunnels beyond.

It's possible that Gorogan is only *mostly* dead. The combination of magic and desperate heroism that defeated him in the first place turned most of him to stone, but parts are still fighting the transformation. His heart is definitely still flesh (or whatever mix of condensed hatred and congealed magic passes for flesh among demons, anyway)—it can be heard booming through the tunnels. Incredibly powerful . . . entities protect the heart. These might be lesser demons Gorogan spawned in his last moments, spirits sent by the Great Gold Wyrm or some overworld observer, living wards the Archmage placed there, or

something even weirder. An arch-fiend's living heart is, after all, a huge and potential age-ending treasure; it makes sense it would be strongly protected . . . so strongly protected that an epic-tier quest to venture all the way to the heart could make up an entire adventure book all on its own.

The rest of Gorogan's innards are somewhat less alive and, therefore, occupy the border between adventurer- and champion-tier. New demons spawn down there in the hellhole of Gorogan's stomach, and crawl up his tracts toward the surface to disgorge themselves. The fiend's magic also warps the natural environment—if you're looking for gigantic demon-tainted centipedes or intestinal parasites the size of whales, this is the place to be (and the place to hide from awkward questions about why you're interested in such things).

Other parts of Gorogan's stony body fluctuate between life and death. Anti-magic storms thunder through his innards—side effects of his attempts to resist his doom—transmuting the stone back into flesh. You can harness these storms to dispel other harmful magic, so if you've got a curse you can't shake or were turned into a frog, one way to get rid of your problem is to stand in the path of an arch-fiend's counterspell.

Îпнавi†ап†s of †не Îппаrds

Adventurers are not the only ones drawn to Gorogan's Maw; new demons regularly claw their way out of the Abyss into the Maw. Perhaps it feels more like home, or maybe Gorogan's petrified flesh shelters them from the Archmage and Crusader while they get a grip on reality. Use any demons that appear in other books, or introduce the statted up mawlings below.

Gorogan cultists: Periodically, twisted humanoids believe they receive dreams from Gorogan. They trundle off to the Maw with other twisted-minded folk to summon demons, sacrifice princes to the throne, try to resurrect Gorogan, and otherwise engage in dark activities. Most of these cults burn themselves out, as worshiping demons (especially dead demons) is seldom sustainable. Cultists tend to die fighting rival cultists. Truly successful cultists summon things that eat them; still, you can't just wait around for demon cults to carve themselves up they cause too much collateral damage. It's good practice for adventurers to end these cults when they stumble across them.

The **gorovores**, a cannibal cult of demonologists, track the anti-magic storms and descend on patches of freshly-stored flesh to feast. They believe if they consume enough demon-meat, they'll be filled with Gorogan's power and one of them might even become the vessel in which Gorogan is reborn.

They're opposed by the **brethren of the shattered crown**, another cabal of demonologists who believe strengthening Gorogan with rites and offerings until he breaks free and ends the world is the way to bring about the apocalypse. These two cults spend more time fighting each other than anything else, and both accuse the other of harboring followers of the Crusader. You should definitely spend more time worrying about the mysterious horned figures that appear on the Maw's upper slopes and parade down to Gorogan's heart, when the walls between our reality and hell grow thinner.

MAWLING

Sometimes, they mistake adventurers for rock and the adventurers' blood for demonic energy; they swarm over the unlucky victim until they finish their feeding frenzy, only then discovering their mistake.

Weakling 4th level mook [DEMON] Initiative: +7

Mandibles +9 vs. AC-4 damage

Natural even hit: 6 ongoing damage

Natural 14+: Mawlings add the escalation die to their attacks against this target (save ends)

AC	19	
PD	18	HP 7 (mook)
MD	15	

Mook: Kill one mawling mook for every 7 damage dealt to the mob.

Brethren of the Shattered Crown

These cultists believe they are the only ones who can awaken Gorogan (they can't). They believe that Gorogan will rise soon (it won't) and consume the world (no, not on its best day). The cultists also believe in using mind-control and sacrificing those who get in their way (they might).

5th level troop [HUMANOID] Initiative: +8

- Shard of the crown +10 vs. AC-18 damage
 - *Natural 16+ hit:* Add 5 to the target's save difficulty until the end of the brethren's next turn.
- C: That light in your eyes . . . it burns +10 vs. MD (1d3 engaged enemies)—15 damage
- *Fear:* While engaged with this creature, enemies with 24 hp or fewer are dazed (-4 to attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.
- *Group Ability:* For every three brethren in the battle (round up), one can use *heavy is the crown* as a standard action once during the battle.
- *Heavy is the crown (group)* **R: +10 vs. MD**—20 damage, and the target is confused.

Nastier Special

The sacrificial lamb!!: Creatures hit by the *heavy is the crown* attack instead start making last gasp saves. For each save failed, each brethren immediately heals 10 hit points.

AC	21	
PD	15	HP 75
MD	19	



GOROVORE CULTIST

This group is fanatical, even for a Gorogan cult. They eat mawlings and Gorogan's stony flesh in an attempt to ascend to Gorogan's throne. Their diet of demonic stone causes them to grow to monstrous size, and allows them to easily chew through plate mail and shields. The brethren attack gorovores on sight, due to the gorovores' habit of feeding on anything that might contain Gorogan's essence—even other cultists.

Large 4th level wrecker [HUMANOID] Initiative: +7

Stone-gnashing bite +9 vs. AC-28 damage

Infernal bile (1d3 engaged enemies) +9 vs. PD-22 damage

- Natural even hit: The gorovore's stomach spray is especially potent (or chunky). The player chooses: either they pop free from the gorovore and are hampered (save ends), or they suffer +14 damage from the burning bile.
- *Fear:* While engaged with this creature, enemies with 18 hp or fewer are dazed (-4 to attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.
- *Feed:* The gorovore can feed on anyone they believe contains Gorogan's essence to grow more powerful. When the gorovore hits with a *stone-gnashing bite* attack against a demon, cultist, or demonologist; roll a d4:
- 1. +2 damage for the rest of the battle
- 2. +1 to attacks for the rest of the battle
- 3. Gain 10 temporary hit points
- 4. +14 damage to all engaged enemies

AC 20	
PD 18	HP 110
MD 15	

THE LOST RIVER

The Lost River runs through the spell-wracked wilderness of the Red Waste, then plunges down a cross-dimensional waterfall into the Abyss, cascading onto hellish rocks littered with the corpses of countless demons—and then, it gets weird.

Travelers throughout Underland have reported encountering caves flooded by a purple or reddish fast-flowing river. Certain crazed explorers speculate the Lost River is a magical symbol, a cryptic shattered mandala. They believe they'll unlock some cosmic secret if they can map the river's course as it rushes and twists through the underworld. Different factions have their theories about what that secret might be: the Diabolist's true name, the arcane key to the Wizard Lord's flying vault, the geas that binds the Blue, or a prophecy that explains how the 13th age ends.

Whether it's a cosmic key or an underworld deathtrap, the Lost River is one of the main ways to travel through Underland. Those who raft along the river may encounter noble silver folk, ettercaps, dwarven and gnomish merchants, river pirates, or bizarre elementals.

Lетніап

These creatures feed on the memories of any who travel the Lost River; they replace the memories with boring lives they sucked all the good stuff out of already.

Large 7th level spoiler [ELEMENTAL] Initiative: +11

Watery fists +12 vs. AC-48 damage

- *[special trigger]* **Waters of forgetfulness +12 vs. MD**—Target's highest background is replaced by a background from the table below until the target's next full heal-up.
- **R: Geyser jet +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—35 damage
- **C: Pull of the current +12 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)** Targets are moved as though teleported into engagement with the lethian.

Limited use: 2/battle, as a quick action.

Battering currents: Deal 15 damage to each creature that begins its turn engaged with the lethian.

Watery form: Disengage checks against the lethian are easy saves.

AC	23	
PD	19	HP 200
MD	19	

Natural 16+: Lethian makes a *waters of forgetfulness* attack as a free action.
Dry and Forgotten Backgrounds

Those struck by a lethian may temporarily lose one of their backgrounds (as the lethian feeds on and twists their memories), and find it replaced with a dull (or somewhat bizarre) background. We provide the table below for inspiration—feel free to add your own dull (or mangled) choices to this list:

- 1. halfling turnip farmer
- 2. imperial chamberpot emptier
- 3. Koru bait
- 4. half-orc kitchen diva
- 5. failed food-taster
- 6. Archmage aberration examiner
- 7. ossuary meal grinder
- 8. elven hedgerow trimmer
- 9. dwarven rivet collector
- 10. barnacle scraper
- 11. royal nail clipper
- 12. sewer manager
- 13. forgetful treehugger
- 14. keeper of spoons
- 15. Omen cat herder
- 16. boil lancer
- 17. medicinal leech trainer
- 18. Drakkenhall chimney sweep
- 19. elven sycophant
- 20. hellhole interior designer

MOONWRECK TVNNELS

Moonwreck's surface is a broken land of tundra and shattered stone, inhabited by only a few eccentric sorcerers and wandering beasts. Weird magical blizzards regularly sweep across Moonwreck—these storms chill victims to their souls; anyone who perishes from the cold is likely to return as an undead creature of some sort. The fallen snow, too, exhibits an alarming and quite malign *intelligence*—it drifts deliberately to block safe pathways, it piles itself in on unstable slopes as though getting ready for an avalanche, and it forms itself into bizarre structures. Archvillains looking for one-night fortifications in the service of dramatic schemes may find that Moonwreck's snow is willing to accommodate them.

The tunnels and caves below Moonwreck, though, are more survivable. The denizens use the tunnels to hide from the snowstorms, taking shelter from the cold in caves warmed by blazing yak-dung fires or sorcerous conflagrations. A diverse lot inhabit these tunnels—barbarian tribes who've lived in Moonwreck since time immemorial, exiles from the Empire, refugees fleeing orc invasions from across the Frost Range mountains, sorcerer cults, etc. The lost and forgotten often end up in Moonwreck, where they find a new life below. There are a few hardy Imperial frontier villages along the river on the surface; but, if you go much further south, you're in Cairnwood (and you don't want to be in Cairnwood), where the villages are riddled with secret stairs and tunnels that lead down. These towns are known for their high sorcerer population, but poets, bards, seers, and fools also live here—something about this region fosters strange dreamers.

Dwarves, drow, and ettercaps are regular visitors to the Moonwreck tunnels, though not usually at the same time. Hobgoblins are also a significant threat; their tribes train ice worms as troop transports and smash through barriers to raid inhabited tunnels.

The Moonwreck tunnels are weirdly normal for most of their length; the walls are either smooth or decorated with faded or worn marks, as though they once held carvings. However, they stop suddenly or pass through jagged discontinuities in places. If the tunnels are the ruined remains of some lost civilization, it surely predates even the serpent folk. Some sorcerers view Moonwreck as a vast puzzle; they believe if they map all the tunnels and correctly reassemble the pattern, they'll unlock mystical powers—but, as everyone knows, you should not rely on sorcerers.

Legends haunt Moonwreck. The best-known tales say the Wizard King fought the White here, or this is the place where the moon once struck the earth; but there are plenty of other accounts whispered around the yak-dung fires:

- Lycanthropes once tried to chain the moon, so they could control their transformations. Their great machine exploded under the strain, creating the broken land of Moonwreck.
- The region was once a great inland sea, but upheavals caused the land to twist and buckle. Some of the water drained into the swamps of Cairnwood, or flowed into underground seas.
- The first moon was destroyed here, disassembled by a wrecking crew of eager giants armed with crowbars.
- It's called Moonwreck because the ancestors saw a blazing light descend from the heavens and crash into the earth. The only thing that burned so brightly was the moon, so they assumed the moon had crashed.

Notable figures in the district include:

- The Abbess of Ghost Dragon Monastery: Ghost Dragon Monastery is a secret underground monastery, hidden in a cavern deep beneath the snowy wastes. The monks and adepts who train here claim to have spiritual contact with the Ghost of the White Dragon, just as the paladins and clerics of the Golden Order are in touch with the spirit of the Great Gold Wyrm. They claim the White was the first hero to defy the Wizard King's tyranny, and their order fights for justice and freedom from unworthy rulers. The Abbess is an ancient woman who has led the order for three ages; her skin appears eggshell-thin, and strange energies glow within her—as though her body is the vessel for cosmic forces. In recent years, the Abbess has hinted the Emperor is becoming a tyrant, and the Ghost Dragon may soon inspire his order to foster revolution across the land.
- Aranth Longstep of Moonedge: Moonedge village is technically Imperial territory, but it's so isolated, no one has seen an Imperial magistrate or legionnaire in years. Aranth, a veteran ranger and guide to Moonwreck, guards the village.

He knows the tunnels like the back of his hand (except when there's a full moon and both sides of his hand become quite hairy, indeed)

- The Riddling Worm: This curious monster is a gigantic, pale white worm, large enough to swallow an ox without chewing. It burrows through the ground beneath Moonwreck, occasionally popping its titanic head up to pester travelers with riddles, philosophical conundrums, and intrusive personal questions. If you entertain the worm, you can sometimes persuade it to create new tunnels leading to a desired location under Moonwreck, or even dig all the way down to the Hollow Realm. If you ignore it, the worm gets angry.
- Iligrim the Sorcerer-Giant: Moonwreck is home to many sorcerers, and Iligrim is certainly the . . . biggest. He claims he was once human (or, in some accounts, a halfling) and discovered he has a unique, sorcerous talent: he can *eat* magic—and the more he eats, the bigger he gets. He fled to Moonwreck so he could master his power in solitude. Soon, he'll be large enough to march south to Horizon and gobble up every spell the Archmage can throw at him—or so he boasts, anyway. Some adventurers manage to successfully bargain with Iligrim, especially those who bring back raw chunks of magical power from the underworld and trade them for Iligrim's aid or treasure. Others are gobbled up by the giant; he may be able to survive on magic alone, but he still eats for pleasure.

ORC WARRENS

Orc warrens aren't just tunnels dug by orcs—they're wounds in the earth, abscesses spawned by carnage and the presence of orcs (although, that's a tautology). When a warband of orcs enters a region that has the right combination of soil, sorrow, and sorcery, the warrens form spontaneously. Portions of earth liquify and rock and dirt pour forth in a gush of tainted slime and gore. More orcs sprout in the darkness below, tearing themselves from the cave walls; their skin is as soft as wet earth at first, but quickly grows stone-hard. The tunnels of orc-warrens such as this are disturbingly *organic*. Slime drips from the curved walls and toxic gases belch from somewhere deep below. They're carnivorous, too—the warrens consume the leftover carcasses from the orcs' grisly meals.

The Orc Lord's advance seems to have conjured a huge network of warrens, spreading out from the northwest. So far, dwarven sappers have managed to keep these infestations from breaching Forge's underground defenses or undermining the very mountains, but the warrens keep growing like weeds.

Some half-orcs have a natural attunement to the presence of orc-warrens. This talent can be cultivated—half-orc diviners often walk the fields of the Empire with divining rods in hand, scanning for underground warrens. Wyvern wishbones make the best divining rods for this purpose.

Fighting İligrim

Start with any giant you like, just make sure it's at least 4 levels higher than the PCs. Add the following two abilities:

- *Magic-eater:* When Iligrim is hit by an attack that benefited from a magic item's bonus, roll an easy save (6+). If the save succeeds, the magic item's bonus shuts down until the end of the battle.
- *Spell-eater:* When Iligrim is the target of a spell, roll an easy save (6+). If the save succeeds, the spell has no effect, and Iligrim heals hit points equal to 5x the spell's level.

In addition, there's a fun ability we created for the primordial giants of Glorantha that should work well for Iligrim. To paraphrase the text from *13th Age Glorantha* (page 299):

Knocked down, but not out: You defeat Iligrim by driving him off, not by slaying him. When Iligrim drops to 0 hit points, he's not slain. Instead he gains hit points equal to his full normal hit points and adds the escalation die to all his attacks until the end of the battle. If that sounds terrible, don't fear: Iligrim has no interest in continuing to fight. He attempts to leave the battle. He only attacks creatures that take actions to prevent him from leaving. If you want to fight the giant again, you can, but all he wants to do is leave. In Iligrim's mind, he's been beaten. He doesn't want to have to confront whoever beat him again, and if he can stay out of that creature's way, he will. If forced, he will fight again. But there's a chance that he will change sides next time to be allied with the creature who beat him, or take some even more unpredictable action.

There are other fun abilities for primordial giants in that same entry, but they would work best for giants other than Iligrim.

13 Perils of the Orc Warrens

- 1. Newborn orcs claw their way out of the walls
- 2. An orc axe-smith attacks with forge-hot axe
- 3. The ground liquifies beneath the intruders, drowning them in a slurry of earth and orc blood
- 4. This warren connects to a larger underground chamber or dungeon, allowing cross-pollination of monsters
- 5. This warren connects to the larger warrens spawned by the Orc Lord; reinforcements approaching!
- 6. The *Dangerous* trigger effect of these orcs kicks in when they're in cramped, twisty tunnels, instead of when they are not staggered.
- 7. A concealed trapdoor leads to a chute, the chute leads to a cave, and there's a wyvern in the cave. The wyvern's gullet leads to its stomach.
- 8. Violent spirits guard a bizarre shrine to orcish gods here; attacking the priests conjures more spirits with every swing of your sword. Resolve the encounter peacefully, or be mobbed by divine servitors.

- Local dryads and other nature-spirits were perverted and ruined by the orc-warrens; they're now in league with the orcs and in touch with their own feral, blood-thirsty sides. (Apply stats from 13th Age Bestiary 2, pages 202–209.)
- 10. Prisoners entombed in the walls are now hostages connected to the warren—kill the orcs, and the prisoners die, too.
- 11. Injured orcs slap dirt from the tunnel walls on their wounds to heal more swiftly; orcs can regenerate while in the warren.
- 12. This warren is like a beehive, in which swarms of orc defenders try to cook invaders in a tide of a boiling orc blood.
- This is not an orc-warren at all—the orcs are illusions conjured by gnomish hermits/dwarven claim jumpers/ invaders from below.

RED DUST EXILES

These outlaws live in the demon-tainted, monster-wracked tunnels and caves beneath the Red Wastes. Their ancestors were Imperial citizens that lived on the surface, until the devastation the Red Dragon wrought drove them to take shelter below. They refused to abandon their former homeland for the safer lands of Santa Cora or the Imperial territories to the west, and they no longer acknowledge the Emperor as their liege lord.

The red dust bandits emerge from their hiding places underground to hunt the monsters and demons of the wastes, but any chance to reclaim their lost lands is long gone. They've become monstrous themselves—mutated by the Abyssal radiation, scarred by long hardships, and tainted by bargains with demonic forces and weird magic. They now plot against both hell and the Empire, and they are allied with the Crusader.

They dwell in a network of caves protected by cunning traps to keep out wandering monsters, thick curtains and veils to keep out the poisonous dust, and potent wards made from orc skulls to keep out demons. When they go on raids, they paint their faces with red ochre. The red dust people practice ritual sacrifice; they sometimes waylay travelers along the roads (both above and below the ground) to rob them and use them as offerings.

The **Ashen Harpy** is the matriarch of the red dust people (she's human, probably), and she rules over their largest settlement: the **Hide**. The Hide's location is secret—visitors are blindfolded (or blinded, if the Harpy is in a bad mood), and the whole settlement can be moved in a matter of hours. The Harpy rarely leaves the Hide, but some of her warriors were seen as far afield as Eld, which suggests she's looking to make a pact with the High Druid, along with her existing alliance with the Crusader.

Red Dust Exiles as Adversaries

Living in the Red Wastes requires a specific mix of desperation and fortitude. The exiles are marauders, trappers, and anarchists. They've learned to hide from and hunt the creatures that live in the tunnels beneath the Wastes, sometimes using unwitting adventurers or other strangers in their attempts to survive. The exiles generally have no interest in fighting to the death, and thanks to their deep understanding of the creatures of the Waste, they generally don't have to! With luck, they arrange confrontations so their enemies end up killing each other.

Create battles with the red dust exiles as normal-strength battles, in terms of how many exiles start the fight, and fill out the numbers with animal allies. Just don't count on the exiles sticking around until the bitter end.

Use the following ability for the red dust exiles:

Wasteland summoners: When the escalation die reaches 2, roll a d6 at the start of each round. If you roll equal to or less than the escalation die, roll on the Wasteland Monster table below. Add the rolled monster or monsters to the battle, far away from the PCs, and roll initiative for the newly arrived creatures. Add +5 to each surviving exile's initiative; whenever an exile acts this round, it uses all its actions to flee the battle, escaping into pre-prepared boltholes, disappearing in swirls of cloaking dust, or being snagged by allies from hidden tunnels right under the PCs' noses. (If a PC finds a foolproof way to ensure an exile can't disappear from the fight, bully for them—let it keep fightin'!)

If the adventurers defeat the red dust exiles before the wasteland monster shows up, reward them for completing a normal fight. If the wasteland monster shows up, hit the PCs with sufficient numbers to count as at least a double-strength battle, built entirely of the incoming monsters. Assuming the PCs don't flee themselves, count this as an extremely hard fight.

Wasteland Monster

Choose something appropriate, or roll a d8:

- 1. A Babble of Gibbering Mouthers (13B2: 109)
- 2. A Blarrrg of Chaos Beasts (13B: 39)
- 3. A Conch of Chuul (13B: 47)
- 4. A Geode of Basilisks (13B: 10)
- 5. A Magazine of Bulettes (13A: 208)
- 6. A Mess of Otyughs (13A: 243)
- 7. A Mound of Ankhegs (13A: 208)
- 8. A Neck of Hydras (13A: 236, & 13B2: 154)

Red Dust Marauder

They say the red waste dust is bad for your brain, but BLARARRG!

3rd level troop [HUMANOID] Initiative: +5

Dust stained blade +10 vs. AC-10 damage *Natural even hit:* The target is stuck.

Resist fire 16+: When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	19	
PD	17	HP 36
MD	13	

Red Dust Commando

Hard people for a hard-baked wasteland.

Зrd level troop [HUMANOID] Initiative: +6

Waste-forged spear +8 vs. AC-13 damage Natural odd miss: +4 damage

- R: Alchemical charges +8 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)—8 damage Natural 11-15: The target suffers 5 ongoing fire damage. Natural 16-18: The target is stuck (hard save ends, 16+). Natural 19+: The target is confused.
- *Resist fire 16+:* When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	17	
PD	16	HP 45
MD	13	

Red Dust Seer

They read your future in the ashes. Your future is bleak.

4th level leader [HUMANOID] Initiative: +6

Poisoned dagger +9 vs. AC—10 damage Natural even hit: 4 ongoing poison damage

- **R: Foresighted strike +10 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—10 damage *Natural 16+:* The next attack from a red waste exile that hits also dazes its target.
- The Huntresses: While at least two seers are in play, roll a d4 instead of a d6 for wasteland summoners.
- *Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	21	
PD	16	HP 50
MD	19	

THE ROOTWEB

The rootweb connects living trees to each other; it's a network of fungi and interwoven roots and tendrils, a subtle mesh of life that makes the whole forest one great, green mind. The rootweb's pathways widen into tunnels large enough to be traversed in some places—especially beneath the Wild Wood. The air in these tunnels is thick with spores and the smells of the forest floor; burrowing animals and insects are everywhere. Those who travel in the rootweb are within the physical channel of the forest's very *mind*, and neither their thoughts nor their bodies are entirely their own. There is deep, wild magic in the rootweb—the earth power—and those who trespass here may be forever altered. The tunnels are especially dangerous during times of change—at sunset and sundown, at the turning of the seasons, or when the weather on the surface shifts.

For all its eerie beauty, the rootweb is vulnerable. If an attacker gains access to such tunnels, they can poison or corrupt the entire forest. This could even happen accidentally—if you kill a dragon or other powerful foe in the wrong spot, its blood or essence could seep into the local rootweb; a few years later, you've got a semi-sentient forest out for revenge.

Druids have known about the rootweb's power since the time before time, and they have learned to shape and channel it. They dig tunnels, raise earthworks and standing stones, and draw great symbols on the land to tap this wild earth power and use it in their rituals. Such procedures are dangerous—if the druid doesn't properly attune to the rootweb, the earth power can have . . . unexpected effects. Druids have been known to spontaneously transform into animals or trees, lose their minds, or explode in bursts of wild nature-magic when they fail to cleanly tap the rootweb.

While the High Druid was absent from the Empire, the once-extensive earthworks around and beneath the Wild Wood's rootweb fell into disrepair. Some were forgotten and lost beneath the forest; others fell into the hands of small, local druidic cults who now cling jealously to their fragment of the greater earthworks. Now, the High Druid has returned, and she has started to reclaim the earthworks under and around her wood. Still, some of the key rootweb tunnels and structures are under farmland now claimed by New Port.



Ancient Druidic Earthworks

The following are some key items to watch for as you blunder through the enchanted rootweb tunnels:

Paths or **lines** are channels druids made to direct the flow of energy in the rootweb. These are straight lines, either dug underground or drawn on the surface, that pull magic through the web and push it toward another earthwork. Remember, such a line could be at an angle straight through the earth! Earthworks are three-dimensional structures, not lines on a map.

Mounds collect and store earth power, while **standing stones** allow a druid to tap the magic for use in spells. **Rivers** and **springs** (including artificial springs) purify earth power, washing away any unexpected magical influences (like, say, necromantic vibrations caused by the rootweb going through a graveyard or lost battlefield); while **lakes** calm earth power, dampening it down and making it safer. **Figures** are huge pictures or sigils cut into the ground that depict ancient heroes, gods, or icons; earth power channeled into such a depiction boosts spells connected with that figure's deeds.

Finally, **sacred places** are naturally occurring eddies or crossroads in the rootweb where earth power collects and pools. Strange things happen in such places—the rock might spontaneously birth magic items, or portals to the elemental realms might suddenly open. Sacred places tend to attract—or generate—guardians.

Terrain Casters in the Vnderworld

If you're playing a druid with the Terrain Caster talent from 13 *True Ways* (page 52), or if you have one in your campaign, you'll be familiar with creative answers to the question, *"what's the terrain like here?"* A section devoted to the underweb of the great forests and druidic earthworks seems like the place to address the eight druidic lands and where you might draw upon them in the underworld.

Cave, dungeon, underworld: Most everywhere in the underworld, with the notable exception of . . . no, we don't have an exception, even the Fallen Star Caverns are clearly just that—caverns. Consider yourself challenged, GM, to engineer an underworld location that fails to offer underworld magic!

Forest, woods: The rootweb, mostly. Maybe a dark temple (see Dark Temples, page 51) to an ancient evil god of the woods. Perhaps, just perhaps, an area touched by a deeper vein of true earth (see Arcane Veins, page 48).

Ice, tundra, deep snow: We don't do much with ice in this book, but that could be a mistake. Anywhere it's cold and wet, there could be ice underground; even in areas far removed from the Moonwreck tunnels (page 36). Apply wherever you like, particularly around elemental erratics (page 57).

Koru behemoth: We don't talk about the part of the underworld more or less directly under the Koru migration paths. Perhaps you will!

Mountains: A fast-talking player could argue for the Salt Mines of the Manticore (just below), Forge (page 29), or the Chasm of Night's Breath (page 50). We're not sure we'd agree with them—at least, not more than once, as a desperate ploy aided by an icon relationship advantage. Maybe your mountainsense differs?

Plains, overworld: Three regions seem obvious: the Fallen Star Caverns (page 28), the sacred places mentioned above in the druidic earthworks list, and the sunlit presence of the sunbearer golems (page 62). Simply standing by a darkened waystone (page 62) is probably not enough, but with an icon relationship advantage to help, the Mechanical Sun's echo might be enough

Ruins: You don't need us to point out the ruins scattered through the underworld!

Swamp, lake, river: Fairly common, especially in the Grand Dismal Sump (page 58), the Lost River (page 35), and the Steam Tunnels (page 41). Probably the Sunken City of Stormbreak (page 41), too. And so on!

SALT MINES OF THE MANTICORE

The bad Emperors of the past turned a sprawling salt mine near the Knee Deep into a gigantic prison for criminals, dissidents, crazed wizards, monsters, and other troublemakers. A vertical shaft was the only access to the prison; prisoners were lowered into the maze and abandoned. They clipped the wings of flying creatures to keep them from escaping. The only sentence was life—and that life rarely lasted long. Manticores were permitted to use the salt mines as a hunting ground; it's believed the manticores found the salty meat of long-term inmates especially delicious.

Now, such bad days are gone, and the Emperor no longer sentences his enemies to be ceremonially eaten by manticores. The mine still exists, though. It's full of vengeful ghosts, inbred monsters, and salt liches, all hungry to ravage the surface lands. Closing the prison's entrance could contain this salty pile of evil. Successive Emperors have tried to close the mine, but the manticores of the surrounding hills, who jealously guard their ancestral rite to hunt in the mine, block their attempts. Since the Empire no longer sends prisoners to the mines, the manticores have taken to swooping down and grabbing fresh victims. They usually try to dress up these kidnappings as civic-minded acts of justice, plucking unlucky villagers who've committed some minor offense off the ground and carrying them away to be *sentenced*.

The Bad Old Days Are Here Agaiπ

If the Emperor in your campaign is evil . . . or if forces nominally loyal to the Emperor, but mostly out for their own gain, have more power than they should . . . or if an enemy icon has a cunning plot to make the Emperor look bad . . . they may have reopened the Salt Mines of the Manticore as the Dragon Empire's worst short-stay prison.

SMUGGLER'S TUNNELS

Not all of Underland's tunnels are magical or unnatural. The tunnels around Shadow Port were dug via honest work—although, that's about the only thing that's honest about them, as criminal gangs now use these tunnels to smuggle. A network of sea caves, tunnels, and old mines let thieves move from Glitterhaegen to Shadow Port without ever seeing the light of day. These tunnels also connect to the underworld proper, and the Prince's people trade in strange goods from below.

Many groups use these tunnels, and an unofficial truce exists between certain factions. Certain tunnels are under the control of one group or another; only their allies may pass safely. Ambushes and cunning traps await unwelcome trespassers.

A complex system of chalked glyphs and graffiti signals up-to-date changes in the web of alliances and grudges to any who can read them. Unless the adventurers have contacts in the criminal underworld, they risk terrible danger in this part of the physical underworld.

13 Encounters in the Smuggler's Tunnels

- 1. Ettercap cultists of She Who Spins in Darkness (page 70) are using the tunnels to secretly bypass the sections of Underland controlled by silver folk and dwarves. These tunnels are obviously a murderously guarded secret.
- 2. Glitterhaegen revolutionaries are plotting to blow up the city's guilds and nobles from beneath the streets.
- 3. Middle Sea pirates hauling chests of gold and loot from hidden sea-coves.
- 4. Shadow Port smugglers trying to evade Imperial customs checks.
- 5. Dark elf drug dealers creeping up from beneath to sell their strange potions and tinctures to the unwary.
- 6. Dwarven looters who robbed forbidden dwarven ruins below and are now trying to avoid the Dwarf King's assayers.
- 7. Black dragon monks using the tunnels to move about, unseen.
- 8. Arcane traders on their way to the black markets of Horizon to sell rare ores and magical components not licensed by the Archmage.

- **9. Crusader scouts**—these stern-faced warriors in spiky armor are looking for demons.
- **10. Diabolist cultists**, hooded and cloaked, tracing occult sigils on the walls.
- 11. Shadow Port thieves hiding down here while the heat's on.
- **12. Escaped criminals and deserters** on the run from the Imperial legions.
- **13.** The halfling mafia; at just at the right height to break your kneecaps.

steam tunnels

The steam tunnels of the northeast—relics of a previous age run beneath the ruined Grey Towers, out under the Iron Sea, and all the way to the Isle of Fire. The tunnel network must connect to the magma reservoir beneath the volcanoes, because the tunnels fill with clouds of flesh-searing steam every few days. The pressure builds up over time, so it's possible for adventuring parties to make forays into the tunnels . . . as long as they get out before the next steam blast.

The steam tunnels are strange. Possible visitors include fire giants that enjoy the relaxing steam, fugitive flaming skulls escaped from Drakkenhall, or a volcano dragon and its redscale dragonic sous-chef.

SUNKEN CİTY OF STORMBREAK

A few ages ago, Stormbreak was one of the Dragon Empire's great cities, on par with Axis, Horizon, or Highrock. This was before the Blessed Emperor calmed the Midland Sea—back then, storms raged across the waters; though, all their fury did not avail them against this city's adamant walls. Doughty Stormbreak sailors crossed even the wildest oceans in ships built according to a secret method known only to Stormbreak natives.

Some catastrophe sank Stormbreak into the underworld, destroying much of the city and depositing its remnants in caverns below the ground. Choose one of the following catastrophes to be true, and leave the others to the bards:

- The High Druid was so offended by Stormbreak's defiance of nature that she cursed it, sinking it into the earth.
- The city was built in a volcano's shadow. One day, the volcano set its shadow ON FIRE.
- The lords of the city were secret Wizard King loyalists, and they plotted against the Emperor. When their treachery was exposed, they murdered everyone in the city and offered the deaths to the Lich King, who caused the city to sink into a giant grave.
- Stormbreak was sacked by mysterious invaders from across the Iron Sea. The city was abandoned; over time, the ruins were covered over with earth.
- The wizards of Stormbreak used to trap storms in caverns under the earth to tame the wild sea. One day, the caverns could hold no more—and they exploded.



• The walls of Stormbreak could endure any outside siege or attack—but not one from below. Sappers from Underland tunneled under the city, causing it to collapse it in a surprise attack that started a war between the surface realm and the lands below.

The city ruins quickly became infested with monsters, the way ruined cities do. A small village, Brokken, sits atop the ruins. The villagers know about some ways in and out of the ruins, and they can more or less advise adventurers on the best places to explore—or avoid. Hard to tell the difference, isn't it? Especially for villagers who haven't gone there themselves

Stormbreak Adventure Seed Tables

Roll a d20 on each of the following tables; or, just scan through them until you find an adventure seed that works for your adventure.

Roll	Location in the Ruins
1	Old warehouses that still contain trade goods from when the city fell
2	A wizard's tower, protected by still-active wards
3	A ruined, crumbling, and mazelike tenement block
4	City walls, shattered and on the verge of collapse
5	A former bank with sturdy walls (also, vaults full of traps and treasure)
6	The ruined port, where a sunken ship contains a hold of lost valuables
7	The old library. Know what happens when magic grimoires rot?
8	The fortress that once guarded the entrance to the harbor—what smuggled goods were impounded here?
9	A magical lighthouse, twin (or precursor) to the one at Vigil
10	A tangle of streets and slums around the docks—what powerful figure lived here in obscurity?
11	A temple to the Gods of Light, where people huddled for safety as the end approached
12	The (hidden) temple to the Dark Gods, where the desperate bargained for their lives as the end approached
13	The great coral temple to the powers of the sea, where priests traded with merfolk and unknown spirits
14	The fortress at the city's heart, where the Emperor stationed his dragon cavalry
15	The city prince's palace, where it's said the last prince sang a magical lament as Stormbreak fell
16	The stinking, overflowing, flooded sewers
17	The tower of the Golden Order, which just might spark with holy golden (monster-attracting) light if a paladin were to enter
18	The first expedition's remains—from when the dwarves attempted to reclaim the buried city
19	The second expedition's remains—from when an evil necromancer attempted to turn Stormbreak into a city of liches
20	The third expedition's remains—former looters from the underworld

BOOK OF THE VIDERWORLD

Roll	Perils
1	Rising flood waters mean a race against time
2	Angry ghosts object to the adventurers' presence
3	Still-active magical wards make spellcasting perilously explosive
4	Rival adventuring party seeks the same treasure; they're not above opportune murder
5	Unstable cave ceilings are at risk of collapse
6	Mass grave means masses of soggy zombies
7	Still-smoldering volcano releases poisonous gases and pyroclastic flows
8	Rock pools and stagnant floodwaters retain sullen anger of the former sea
9	Swarms of venomous insects are controlled by sinister hive intelligence
10	Cannibalistic survivors of the ruined city welcome tasty intruders
11	Still-active volcano about to erupt again
12	Rival looters spread all manner of traps ahead of the adventurers
13	Sunken city is on the verge of sinking deeper
14	This part of the city sank at a steep angle—streets are now vertical cliffs
15	All the evil of the old Midland Sea collected and congealed here
16	Curse of the angry sea still lurks in the ruins; cursed adventurers can no longer safely travel by ship or boat and are followed by affectionate, puppy-dog thunderstorms
17	Invaders from the underworld undermined the city; the whole place is about to collapse
18	Recent rainstorms flooded ruins with thick mud; it's impossible to distinguish solid ground from sucking mud traps
19	Trapped thunderstorm accidentally freed by excavations explodes inside the cave, hitting adventurers with floods, gales, thunderbolts, and acute tinnitus
20	That shuddering heralds the opening of a new hellhole. Someone is here to pry it open (or is trying to close it).

Roll	Foes
1	Demons (servitors escaping ancient binding spells)
2	Demons (incoming hellhole)
3	Derro (up from below)
4	Dragon (scavenger or in lair)
5	Dragon (sent from Drakkenhall)
6	Ghouls, lots of ghouls
7	Goblins, so many goblins
8	Kobolds, even more kobolds
9	Manticore, claiming ancient hunting rights
10	Oozes, aquatic or synthetic
11	Orcs, lots of orcs
12	Sahuagin (the sea hates adventurers)
13	Skeletons and zombies (controlled by a necromancer)
14	Skeletons and zombies (vengeful dead)
15	Troglodytes, can you smell 'em?
16	Vampire—overslept after destruction of city; now somewhat confused
17	Wights, led by vengeful wight captain
18	Wraiths, born of storm-clouds and hatred
19	Roll again, twice
20	Roll again, three times

Roll	Complications & Twists
1	Long-lost heir to the city demands return of looted goods; claims Dwarf King as legal precedent
2	Advance intelligence was terribly flawed; adventurers must search other locations to find treasure
3	Denizens of the city are alive and well, and quite happy to be independent from Imperial rule and subterranean lifestyle. Sinister magics are definitively involved.
4	Treasure is much too bulky to fit through exit passageway
5	Spirit of lost city is sentient, and is slowly rebuilding itself. It's bitter that everyone abandoned it.
6	Bands of roving scholars that seek lore offer side quests and assistance; but they may attract hungry monsters
7	Former adventurers possessed by ghosts offer somewhat outdated local expertise in exchange for a proper burial
8	Improper funeral rites mean this is Lich King turf; undead knights arrive to enforce jurisdiction
9	Citizens of the lost city were discovered in magical suspended animation; excavations triggered revival process
10	Cult demands sacrifices; the adventurers are this year's designated offerings
11	Temporal cross-currents drag the adventurers back in time to the city's last days
12	Shattered city means the adventurers must take an absurdly circuitous route
13	Malign influence of a dead icon who perished with the city warps the adventurers' own relationships with their patrons
14	First contact with a colony of giant, spellcasting, sentient mutant lobsters; the adventurers must work out how to communicate or they'll be boiled alive in melted butter
15	Portions of the lost city are a rapidly expanding living dungeon
16	Lost city was stripped bare of loot long ago; treasure now salted by Brokken villagers to maintain lucrative adventurer- supply industry
17	The city was secretly destroyed by Imperial forces from Axis; they must cover up the past Emperor's sins by killing anyone who discovers the truth
18	The monster faction here is friendly; roll again on the foes table to discover the real danger
19	Incipient alliance between two groups of monsters threatens the surface world; roll again on the foes table to discover potential allies for monsters
20	Everyone rolls their icon relationship dice again to determine which icons are messing with the ruins this week

VIDERMARCH

The great, subterranean road is only the uppermost of the old dwarven roads. Tunnels similar to Undermarch once linked all the old dwarven realm's outposts and cities. Ancient prophecies state, "when no dwarf walks the King's roads, the doom of stone is come", so it's a point of existential security, not just pride, that Undermarch remains open.

Undermarch's main thoroughfare is a wide tunnel, with runnels cut in the floor for cart wheels. The road is not as straight as maps might suggest, although most of the curves are so gentle and well-engineered the average traveler doesn't even notice the change in direction. Oil-fired lamps and magical crystals provide illumination and heat in the better-maintained parts of the tunnel; but, in other sections, travelers must carry their own torches and wrap themselves up to stay warm in the cold caves.

There's a watch-station every mile, and a watch-house every five miles. All the watch-houses are still manned; the watchstations are mostly empty, though the dwarves still patrol the Undermarch regularly. There are also huge pumps in some sections, in case water leaks down from the lakes above.

Side tunnels off the main path lead to storerooms, customs posts, old mines, and smaller dwarven towns. There are also two great crossroads—one at Anvil, and one half-way along Undermarch, north of Calamity. The latter is known for the Undermarch Door (page 22), which allows access to the underworld—for a price. The Anvil Door was sealed shut long ago—the dwarves won't say why, but you can sometimes hear the sound of something huge *scratching* at the far side of the portal in Anvil.

When Dwarves Are Not Enough

Why do the dwarves hire so many adventurers and send them into Underland if keeping the road open is such a point of pride? Well, fungaloid infestations are resurgent in Underland; no matter how many times you deal with them, another patch crops up in a previously unnoticed side chamber, and fungaloids are notoriously low on the list of what dwarves consider treasure. Their solution to these infestations is to apply adventurers liberally to the site until the irritation (fungal or greedy adventurer) resolves itself.

The Wells of Darkness

There are shafts, yes, wells, yes, like wounds. Like I plunge the dagger in you and the blood wells out, yes, so do they pierce the earth and let the darkness out. We shall sit on the edge of the world and bathe in the blood. We must pick at the scabs so it keeps flowing. You're a fingernail, see? Killing you keeps the beautiful sore weeping a little longer, a little longer. Until the world bleeds to death of unhealing wounds, and we shall be like maggots, pale and white, eating the meat of the corpse forever and ever. Yes. So, don't die yet. Don't die, wait to share in the death of the world.

— a derro speaks

WHİSPERİNG MAZE

The Whispering Maze is a natural labyrinth of caves. There are numerous entrances, so it's easy to accidentally wander into the underworld here. It's not as easy to wander back out—reports tell of strange, whispering voices that promise to guide travelers to safety or show them to buried treasure, but only some of these voices are faithful and true. The trick is trying to figure out which voices are malicious, which are honest, and which are deceitful mixing good advice with bad. The origin of these voices is still a mystery—some believe those who perish here are doomed to haunt the caves, while others blame earth-spirits. Certainly, the caves are home to elementals, gargoyles, and other stony monsters.

Applying the voices: Perhaps the whispers can affect icon relationships? If an adventurer calls on an icon relationship while in the Maze, have them roll an easy save (6+). If they succeed, they manage to cut through the haze and the icon relationship advantage works as expected. If they fail, they call on a different icon, as the Maze redirects their request. This icon relationship still goes off, but it counts as a 5 and comes from a random (or exciting!) new icon. Just imagine the look on your player's face when their paladin's favor comes in from the Crusader instead of the Priestess!

CHAPTER 4:

THE HOLLOW REALM

"To Underhome we belong, and to Underhome we shall return."

- ancient dwarven oath

The middle portion of the underworld is known as the Hollow Realm. Some say the name refers to the vast, yawning caverns of this region—caves so huge they encompass whole nations, so large they contain seas and rivers, clouds and forests, even *suns*. Others use the phrase in reference to the glaring absence at the heart of the underworld—the dwarven empire that once dominated this region, and below, vanished abruptly, and that wound still festers in the 13th age. Here's a list of the many regions and phenomena we touch on in this chapter.

QUICK GUIDE

- Arcane Veins: Thirteen rare and dangerous metals that drove dwarven mining concerns and may well drive your plots.
- **Caverns of Lost Time (page 49):** Weird caverns where most anything may have crash-landed or emerged.
- **Chasm of Night's Breath (page 50):** Giant underworld canyon haunted by echoing harpies, weird darkness, and kobold hang gliders out of their depth.
- **Dark Temples (page 51):** Apparently, the Dark Gods maintain residence down here where the light can't find them.
- **Demon Cysts (page 51):** Rocks with demons inside. BIG rocks.
- **Drowfort (page 52):** Keeps what the silver folk consider *order* with a careful balance between factions. Includes new drider and drow stats and a useful monster table.
- **Dwarven Ruins (page 56):** Fragments of the lost civilization of Underhome.
- **Elemental Erratics (page 57):** The elemental equivalent of underworld storms.
- The Grand Dismal Sump (page 58): A huge underworld swamp; home to warring troglodytes and fungaloids, and to trogs and fungaloids who get along famously.
- The Four Kingdoms of the Mechanical Sun (page 61): Four unique, rival underworld kingdoms built around an astonishing dwarven artifact—a mobile, artificial sun.
- Sea of Claws (page 68): An underworld ocean . . . or maybe a series of huge lakes. You decide.
- **The Throne Under the Mountain (page 68):** A gigantic seat—more artifact than monument.
- **Tomb of the Ten Thousand (page 69):** An ages-old prison for horrible demons and devils. Surprisingly tempting as an adventuring site.
- Web City (page 70): A major city of the drow and their notan-icon, She Who Spins in Darkness, and her maybe-consort, He Who Weaves With Joy.

ARCAΠΕ VEİΠS

Over the ages, the deep underworld's weird environments have created many rare metals and magical crystals that can't be found near the surface. As you might expect, extracting these arcane substances can be even more complicated than the dwarves' lifework of extracting gold and normal gemstones.

Therefore, you should not treat the 13 magical substances below as entries in a book of loot. These substances are not treasures your above-average paladin can liberate from deeply buried veins with a few blows of her holy greatsword. No, these are treasures the most ambitious dwarven miners aim for, but seldom win. Even the empires and kingdoms that now claim the Hollow Realm as home have trouble reliably extracting these substances. Still, these treasures can drive plots—as NPCs and icons contest readily accessible veins—and show up occasionally in small batches as treasure or gifts the PCs receive from their iconic patrons. If the PCs somehow manage to acquire a relevant chunk of one of these metals, they'll probably need to attune it, much like a wondrous item, to receive any benefit from it.

Besides the special properties suggested below, each substance could also be particularly useful for ritual casting. The PCs aren't the only powerful ritual casters in the world play off these substances when one of your powerful NPCs has a villainous plot that needs a power-up.

13 Magical Substances in the Hollow Realm

- 1. The world's ambient magical energy slowly pools and accretes deep in the underworld. Given enough time and pressure, it compacts into **condensed arcanite**—an amber-like substance with metallic veins. Wizards can tap the power of condensed arcanite to boost magical ability through careful rituals (or they can grind it up and snort it, if they're looking for a shortcut to power). It's highly unstable, though, and prone to explode if not handled carefully.
- 2. Said to be clay or dirt leftover from when the gods created the world, a single grain of **true earth** can turn a barren field into fertile soil. A handful can bring life to a desert. True earth ensures the most bountiful harvests imaginable. Oh, and if inhaled, a single dust mote can be lethal—as the victim sprouts the most bountiful harvest of lung microflora imaginable.

- 3. Metamorphic moonstone is a rare gem that looks like coal or common stone—except when the moon is full and it reveals itself as a beautiful gemstone. When properly treated with alchemy to stabilize it, a moonstone is among the most prized of gems. There are two caveats—first, untreated moonstone can turn back into moonlight if exposed to the night sky. Second, all moonstone—treated or not—attracts lycanthropes like savage, bloodthirsty, giant hairy flies to honey.
- 4. Found only in places where the silver folk dwell, drow-silver is technically a metal; but, like its cousin, quicksilver, it's liquid at room temperature. Unlike quicksilver, though, drow-silver can be commanded with song. The right music can induce a pool of drow-silver to blossom into a metallic flower—or shape itself into a sword, a key, or a magical sigil. Further, the right note causes drow-silver to harden until it's stronger than steel. Beware: drow-silver shares its makers' cruel nature and is prone to betray its users in a moment of crisis.
- 5. **Chronocoral** is found near Caverns of Lost Time—it's white or grey in color, chalky to the touch, and immensely heavy. Chronocoral warps time; when ground to a powder, it's an ingredient in potions of longevity. Extended exposure to raw chronocoral can cause temporal suspension—there are miners frozen in time in the underworld; living statues, waiting in the darkness for rescue, carrying a fortune in chronocoral on their backs.
- 6. Shards of **golden dragonscale**—shattered fragments of scales the Great Gold Wyrm cast off when he plunged into hell—were once found only in the southern parts of Underland, near the Abyss. Mountebanks sell fake golden dragonscales and protective talismans as relics, while the surviving Golden Order paladins and weaponsmiths of the Crusader prize real scales to make demon-bane weapons.
- 7. Living heartshards are the remains of failed living dungeons, whose crystal hearts broke (or were shattered by heroic adventurers). They retain potent magical properties—but, if disturbed, there's a chance they'll spontaneously form a small living dungeon on the spot. The Orc Lord's forces sometimes use heartshards as siege weapons or land mines, flinging them into enemy fortresses to be torn apart from within by the newborn dungeon.
- 8. A rare and magical form of natural iron, you can distinguish **colder iron** from its mundane cousin by the thin layer of frost that forms on its surface, even in the heat of the forge. It's prized for its banishing power—demons, elementals, beings from the overworld, certain fae, and other extradimensional entities cannot abide the touch of colder iron. The danger associated with colder iron is the risk of accidentally opening magical portals. An elder civilization used colder iron containment vessels to seal hellholes and gates to other worlds; chip away at a deposit of colder iron, and you risk inadvertently opening a portal to hell.
- Of course, if you do open a portal to hell, you can probably pick up some hell-forged bronze there—it's a demonic alloy, a fusion of the hellish realm and base matter. Sorcerers

and demonologists love to use it in their rituals. You can also obtain hell-forged bronze from encysted demons (page 51) and anywhere near a portal to hell. Of all the rare minerals listed here, hell-forged bronze is the safest to mine—it'll corrupt you, seduce you, and taint your soul; but it would do that on the surface, too.

- 10. **Skystone** fragments come from the Fallen Star Caverns (page 28) and similar ancient crash sites. This flying stone from the overworld gets trapped in the earth; once it's set free, it shoots upward in search of the equilibrium of the sky. Just don't stand in its way when it takes off!
- 11. **True lead** is a rare substance that absorbs magic and light and, if handled directly, life energy. It's like a manifestation of the void—a metal that's somehow also a hole in the world. Only tiny amounts of genuine true lead have ever been found, but con-artists and mischievous goblins regularly try to pass off ordinary lead as the true stuff to unwary buyers. It's said most of the true lead in the Empire is held in reserve in a secret vault in Axis, just in case the Emperor ever needs to eliminate a rogue Archmage.
- 12. The substance used to make crystal balls and other scrying devices, **shewstone** is a translucent crystal you can polish and grind until it's clearer than the best glass. In its raw form, though, it can serve as a natural window to other dimensions—and things from the other side can see through the stone, too
- 13. The bizarre **iconos** metal looks like copper with a slightly greenish tinge. It resonates with power and authority. A balanced needle made of pure iconos can serve as a compass, pointing to the nearest icon. An iconos sword can cut through an icon's magical defenses. An iconos ring can enhance an icon's authority, and a chain can bind the icon, turning their own strength against them. Perhaps most valuable of all, though, is the iconos' ability to *predict* icons who have yet to come into their own. It's said seers who poured molten iconos into bowls of water predicted the rise of both the Priestess and the Crusader; the metal congealed in the shapes of a holy crook and a mailed fist, respectively.

CAVERNS OF LOST TIME

Sometimes, the living earth convulses and swallows a region, sucking it down into the depths and entombing it inside a cavern like a fly caught in amber. These isolated caves of the Hollow Realm are a great place to keep, well, stuff. If you've got an age from the *Book of Ages*, pieces from *Shards of a Broken Sky*, or an adventure from another setting that doesn't quite fit into your take on the Dragon Empire, stick it down here in the underworld and have your adventurers happen across it.

The flow of time can become warped in such places—a day spent underground can be a year or more on the surface, or viceversa. The dwarves of old made magical clocks to protect travelers from temporal distortions, but few of these relics survived to the 13th age, and the secrets used to make them were lost.

CHASM OF ПІGHŤ'S BREAŤH

This yawning gulf is one of the most infamous travel obstacles in the Hollow Realm. Going *around* the chasm adds weeks to any journey—and the easier routes around are haunted by bandits, ghost bandits (whose untimely deaths are thanks to heavily armed adventurers), and monsters. So, sooner or later, everyone crosses the Chasm of Night's Breath.

The chasm's lower reaches are lost in a coal-colored fog; some legends insist this fog is the element of night's darkness that when the sun sets in the surface world, the fog rushes up through the chasm and is exhaled out into the air, filling the night sky with darkness. Huge winds certainly do blow through the chasm at semi-regular intervals, but the chasm is so large it has its own weather system. Enterprising kobold hang gliders and harpies attempt to fly on these winds, and avaricious alchemists sometimes try to bottle the fog to determine whether it's really elemental night. Both activities often lead to the other thing for which the chasm is famous: beings falling or being thrown to their deaths. Some quirk of the chasm's acoustics allows the screams to echo for miles. (Harpy colonies along the chasm's northern end have mastered the technique of wailing at the right frequency to trigger this effect.)



Huge stalagmites and demon cysts (page 51) rise from the chasm's unknowable depths; built (or strung) between them are dozens of bridges of varying reliability. Crossing from one side of the chasm to the other entails finding the bridges that are intact, safe, and not under the control of hungry monsters or unfriendly factions. The dark elves, in particular, control several of the most important anchor-spires, and can swiftly weave new bridges out of spider-silk. The best route to cross the chasm changes regularly, as new bridges are built, old bridges collapse, and specific spires and bridges change hands in the constant territory squabbles. (Losers get thrown into the chasm.) The one thing all the bridge-denizens agree on is that flying is dangerous. The wind and fog seem eager to pull flying creatures—aside from the local harpies-down into the depths. If the adventurers are determined to fly over the chasm, they must make an easy save every round. If they fail, they start to fall. They must make the save again at the start of each round; if they fail four saves in a row, well, they probably hit bottom or were grabbed by something huge and ancient. Unlike the local harpies, hang gliding kobolds are not immune to the effect, but they're kobolds. Life is short.

*Пі***GH**[†]'s **BREA**[†]**HARPY**

The harpies here love the way screams echo ... theirs or yours.

8th level spoiler [HUMANOID] Initiative: +11

- Mist-wreathed talons +13 vs. AC (two attacks)—15 damage
 - *Echoing damage:* Targets under the effects of *echoing scream* are vulnerable to *mist-wreathed talons*
- C: Echoing scream +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby targets)-35 damage

Natural 16-17: The target is weakened

Natural 18-19: The target is hampered instead of weakened *Natural 20:* The target is confused instead of hampered

Echoing attack: When the target makes their save, the effect transfers to a random nearby ally of the target; it now requires an easy save (6+) to end completely—it doesn't transfer a second time.

Limited use: 1/battle, but the ability recharges when the harpy is staggered.

Flight: The Night's Breath Harpy is quick and graceful.

AC 25	
PD 19	HP 144
MD 20	

DARKTEMPLES

You can find temples and shrines to dead or forgotten Dark Gods throughout the underworld. These cryptic structures may be entirely deserted, attended by a single undying priest, or home to a small cult of degenerate acolytes.

These are the Dark Gods of previous ages—too powerful to truly die, or so completely forgotten that even the icons lost track of them. These temples speak to previous ages and strange craftsmanship; here, you can trot out your Lovecraftian adjectives, such as *eldritch* structures, *chthonic* statues, *cyclopean* architecture, and *inhuman* geometries.

If the adventurers end up in combat in one of these shrines, feel free to require a normal save to see whether they are vulnerable until the escalation die reaches 2, due to the temple's unsettling nature.

Icons: The Crusader may seek out these dark temples for greater power, adding lost deities to bolster the Dark Gods' ranks or to prevent the Diabolist from corrupting a lost god's memory. The Priestess often seeks to redeem or put to rest those buried here, while the Archmage's agents prowl the spaces between the tombs for eldritch purposes.

If you're stuck for inspiration and feel randomness matches the Dark Gods' intentions, roll a d6 to determine what the deity slumbering within a particular temple is waiting for:

- 1. Suitable offerings to win its favor
- 2. Missionaries to expand the god's cult to the surface
- 3. The next age, when the god will rise to conquer
- 4. The prophesied chosen one (bored, undying priests may declare the first half-likely candidate they meet to be the chosen one)
- 5. Worshippers, and the adventurers will do nicely
- 6. Sacrifices, ditto

Presumably, similar lonely temples to the Gods of Light exist in the overworld, but there are fewer desperately hungry, lost, and troglodyte-fleeing adventurers up there.

13 Forgotten Dark Gods

- 1. The Lady of the Knife in Darkness
- 2. Uzark, the Teeth
- 3. Four Heads In A Sack
- 4. The Mourner
- 5. Opolos, the Lord of Doors
- 6. Yithri, Mistress of Nails
- 7. Borog, the Red-handed One
- 8. The Carrion King
- 9. Ymegar, General of the Host of Smoke
- 10. Agarus, Eater of Faces
- 11. Lugno, the Hairy Pillager
- 12. Mun, the God-shadow
- 13. Herunos, the Moon Hunter

DEMON CYSTS

Reality is a prison for demons, but demon cysts make the metaphor literal. Demon cysts aren't a specific place; they're a widely scattered supernatural phenomenon, most common in whatever areas you choose.

Each cyst is a huge, stony crystal that contains one or more demons. There are several converging paths to this phenomenon, and some of them are surprisingly natural.

Demons expelled from collapsing hellholes accrete a sort of *reality scab* that takes a long while to wear away. Hellholes generally form on the surface, not the underworld, but the reality scabs known as demon cysts are heavier than normal reality, and they sink into the underworld.

Some demon cysts hold incredibly ancient demons who were trapped when the world was first created. It's your call whether that makes the entrapped demons extremely weak or incredibly powerful.

Wizards made other cysts. Let's be honest—wizards can be rather unimaginative; as soon as one Archmage decided *forlorn encystment* was the way to deal with troublesome demons, they all copied the spell. If your wizard doesn't have access to the spell in any of their high-level spellbooks, blame the Diabolist. She got tired of mundane spellcasters trapping demons and erased the spell when an Archmage was mid-crisis.

Meanwhile, in reality: Cysts range wildly in size. The largest are the size of mountains, but demons and physics have about as much to do with each other as demons and custard. Some cysts are as small and pretty as gemstones, but they still contain fearsome demonic prisoners. Cysts usually have several internal chambers, inhabited by monsters attracted to or influenced by the demon inside.

Although the demons inside the cysts are physically trapped and immobile, they can still exert psychic influence over those nearby. They can send deceitful dreams, insinuate themselves into vulnerable individuals' thoughts, or even instruct wouldbe demonologists. The less rock between demon and victim, the stronger the influence; so, the first psychic command is usually *"start digging"*. Powerful demons can attract whole cults; but, usually, the stronger the demon, the denser the surrounding cyst—thus, some cults spend countless generations tapping away at their master's prison.

You can mine demon cysts, with the proper precautions. Usually, breaking the cyst frees the demon within, but the right alchemical treatments can preserve the demon's petrification long enough for you to break up the encysted demon. Crystalized demon chunks are a potent source of magical energy, a component in magical items, and a flavorful dessert topping.

DROWFORT

After the fall of Underhome, Drowfort could be the largest intact fortification in the underworld—an invulnerable citadel of obsidian and quicksilver, wound around with the most potent spells of warding and illusion the elves can muster.

The fortress of Drowfort lies halfway between the domain of the silver folk (page 24) and Web City (page 70), and dark elves from both places inhabit it. Drowfort is a rough sphere of dark stone, spiked with hundreds of spires and towers. It hangs, suspended by webbing, in the middle of an immense, circular cavern dotted with tunnel entrances. From here, the dark elves can dispatch their spider-cavalry anywhere in the underworld with terrible swiftness.

The denizens of Drowfort exert a sort of martial law over parts of the underworld, battling demon incursions and monster invasions. They patrol the main trade arteries, the farm caverns, and the underground rivers; assassinating the occasional rogue necromancer from the Magocracy and thwarting apocalyptic cults.

For many ages, the two drow factions have worked together to secure and operate Drowfort, allowing it to become the terror of the underworld. The secret sauce is the ability to draw on resources from the deep underworld and the surface world—and doing so requires what's called the Drowfort compromise. Half the drow here serve the Elf Queen, half serve She Who Spins, and half serve both—and they will never, on pain of death, reveal who they're sworn to obey. (Yes, that is meant to be confusing.) Drowfort is supposed to be neutral ground for a higher cause. That doesn't mean the two drow factions don't struggle for command of the fortress—it means they do it subtly, via blackmail and political scheming. Murder is gauche, at best.

13 Nightmares of Drowfort

It's in their best interest for the drow to spread wild and terrifying rumors about their capabilities; thus, five of the tales below are definitely lies. Unfortunately, the other eight are absolutely true. (If you opt to use any of the strange drow variants below, your numbers may vary.)

- 1. The Eight-Thousand Eyes: Magical scrying windows in Drowfort watch over the whole of the underworld. Maybe the drow watch you from mirrors, or from spiders' eyes, or from the shadows—but wherever you are, they can see you....
- 2. The Parlor of Poisons: The drow breed different strains of venomous spiders; they brew alchemical concoctions, cultivate rare plants, and experiment with mixtures and tinctures to create a whole cornucopia of poisons. They can kill you quickly or kill you slowly; they can make poisons that affect all living creatures, or only a particular type, or a particular bloodline, or one specific individual. They can make injectable poisons, poisons to dissolve in food or drink, and airborne poisons. They know poisonous spells



and even poisonous words—if you speak such a word, you'll die screaming with it on your froth-stained lips.

- 3. The Web of Dreams: The drow can ride into the world of dreams and spy on sleepers. Their dream-assassins can even kill their victims in the dream-realm, so the death looks like it was because of natural causes. If you want to stay alive, never sleep!
- 4. The God Egg: The drow captured the spawn of a divine monster—perhaps a god, or a titanic sea monster from the Iron Sea, or one of the Three. They injected the unhatched egg with flesh-warping chemicals, radioactive ores, and distilled spider-essences. Effectively, they've bred a bomb. If Drowfort ever falls, it'll hatch—and probably eat the world.
- 5. The Mechanical Moon: The dwarves of yore built the Mechanical Sun (page 62) to bring magical light to their sprawling realm. They also built its counterpart—the Mechanical Moon—a machine that draws a cloak of darkness across the underworld. When active, the Mechanical Moon destroys all light within its sphere of influence. The drow captured the Moon and its golems after the fall of Underhome, and converted it into a war machine
- 6. The Briar Elves: The monstrous briar elves live in Drowfort (see 13th Age Bestiary 2, page 22). Well, live isn't quite the right word—they grow in twisted gardens watered with blood. The few briar elves encountered on the surface were field tests, or accidentally released when wind-blown seed fell on fertile soil. When the mistress of Drowfort commands it, they'll all be released on the surface.

- 7. The Trapdoor Portals: The drow spider-cavalry can get anywhere in the underworld with terrifying speed—the drow have a secret network of teleportation portals, and the master portals are in the heart of Drowfort.
- 8. The Spider Golem: When Drowfort's location is threatened, eight gigantic legs unfurl, and eight eyes open. The fortress is a spider golem of prodigious size—a mobile war machine, powerful enough to raze a city or wrap the whole Dragon Empire in webbing for a snack.
- **9.** The Changeling Academy: Hidden in the fortress is a cruel school for kidnapped children. The instructors are drow, but their pupils are human, dwarf, gnome, halfling, and so forth. The drow train these children to be infiltrators, assassins, and agents of the dark elves. They've even mastered the technique of implanting false memories with illusion spells, so their graduates never even remember they attended the cruelest of schools.
- **10.** The Sleeping Queen: An elf-maiden slumbers at the heart of Drowfort, locked in a coffin of imperishable crystal. Is she the Elf Queen, replaced on the surface by a drow duplicate? The Queen's daughter? Something stranger? Or is she Drowfort's secret commander, directing their intelligence operations and strategies from her dreams, locked away in a living tomb to ensure she does not betray the Elf Queen or She Who Spins?
- 11. The Poison Vaults: The drow maintain a stock of the same poison they used to destroy the dwarven empire. Their divinations and prophecies suggest the same poison will be vital to the turning of the 13th age—but is it a weapon against some greater foe, or the plague that will destroy the world?
- 12. The Library of Hearts: At Drowfort's heart is the strangest library—there are endless dark cells, where little boxes and drawers line every surface. Each box is labeled with a name, and it seems there's a box for everyone of note. There's an Emperor box, an Archmage box, and a box for the rulers of Glitterhaegen and New Port. There's a box with your name here, too—and your mother's, your old teacher's, your rival's, and your true love's. Each box contains a tightly wrapped scroll bound with spider-silk, and on that scroll, in the most miniscule letters imaginable, are the intimate secrets, desires, and fears of the person whose name is on the box. This archive's librarians are enchanted spiders that were granted human intelligence—they collect and organize every report from drow spies and Web City's seers.
- 13. The Third Lie: The Elf Queen and She Who Spins both believe Drowfort is a place of divided loyalties, a neutral fortress where two branches of the drow work together to enforce a reign of terror. In truth, Drowfort has its own secret ruler, a trickster who managed to deceive both the Elf Queen and She Who Spins into supporting his bid to conquer the whole of the underworld.

Drow for the Fort

We present a couple new drow here that you can use near Drowfort or elsewhere in the underworld. We recommend mixing them in with drow we've published elsewhere. Speaking of drow we've published elsewhere, here's a table listing the various drow, drider, and spider allies that have appeared in various books. More are coming soon, in the *Elven Towers* adventure and the *Icon Followers* sourcebook.

For the record, we think any monster ability that aids spiders or drow should also aid driders.

Silver Folk Assassin

Don't call her drow. Don't call her assassin. Just ... don't call her.

8th level troop [нималоіd] Initiative: +17

Sword or dagger +13 vs. AC—30 damage, or 45 damage if at least one of the silver folk assassin's allies is also engaged with the target

Natural even hit: 10 ongoing poison damage

R: Poisoned crossbow +15 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)-25 damage

Natural even hit: 10 ongoing poison damage

Gaining momentum: When the silver folk assassin hits with its melee attack, it gains *resist melee damage 18+* against the next melee attack against it. This effect ends if the assassin misses with a melee attack.

AC	24	
PD	22	HP 140
MD	20	

Drow Sorcerer Captaiπ

Part spellcaster; part spidery commander.

9th level caster [HUMANOID] Initiative: +14

Barbed staff +14 vs. AC—40 damage Miss: 15 damage

- **R: Darkfire +14 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—50 damage, and the target is weakened
 - *Limited use:* Once the sorcerer captain hits with *darkfire*, she can't use it again until the target saves.
- **C:** Greater malediction of webs +14 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—34 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends) and takes 15 damage each time it fails the save
- *Dark orison:* Each time the sorcerer captain misses with an attack, the crit range of attacks by drow and spiders in the battle expands by 1.

Spider master: When an enemy hits the sorcerer captain with a melee attack, that attacker takes 25 ongoing poison damage.

AC 2	25	
PD 2	1 H	IP 170
MD 2	4	

Driders

The driders of Drowfort are spies for She Who Spins in Darkness . . . unless they're double agents for the Elf Queen!

Unlike creatures cursed to be driders (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 223), these are drow who served Web City's spidery gods (page 70) and were rewarded with a shape to match their gods' forms; hence, they're humanoid, rather than aberrations. More independent drow joke about these driders as creatures that have "eight legs, all kneeling", but they mute their chuckles and scan the ceiling, just in case a drider lurks above.

Drider Secret Taker

These driders can steal the thoughts inside your head, whether or not they eat your brains.

Large 6th level troop [HUMANOID] Initiative: +12

Brutal daggers +13 vs. AC (up to 2 engaged targets)— 34 damage

Natural even hit against stuck target: The secret taker can make a *poison bite* attack as a free action.

- [Special trigger] Poison bite +9 vs. PD—10 poison damage, and 10 ongoing damage.
- C: Secrets stolen +11 vs. MD (all nearby enemies, roll once against highest MD in group)—the secret taker steals the use of the escalation die from the targets (save ends). Each target must make their save individually. Once all targets save, the secret thief loses the escalation die.

Limited use: 1/battle as a quick action, when the escalation die is 1+.

C: Dark webs +11 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group) the target is stuck

Limited use: 1/round as a quick action, if the escalation die is even.

Wall-crawler: A spider mount can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground, and so can its rider.

AC	22	
PD	20	HP 148
MD	16	

Venom-wracked Drider

The poison of their Dark Gods burns fierce in these driders. Sharing it with enemies doesn't seem to help, but they keep trying anyway.

Large 7th level spoiler [HUMANOID] Initiative: +14

- **Poisoned talons +12 vs. AC (two attacks)**—25 damage and 10 ongoing poison damage
 - *Natural 18+:* The venom-wracked drider can make a *venom infusion* attack as a free action.
- [Special trigger] Venom infusion +12 vs. PD—Target is shocked. The save for both the shocked effect and the ongoing damage from the *poisoned talons* are now hard saves.
- C: Vitriolic webs +12 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)—The target is dazed and takes 10 ongoing damage (save ends both)
 - *Limited use*: 1/round as a quick action, if the escalation die is even.
- *Wall-crawler*: A venom-wracked drider can climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

AC	23	
PD	21	HP 200
MD	18	

Drider Warrior

The high elves can have their sunlit towers; her darkness goes down forever.

Large 9th level wrecker [HUMANOID] Initiative: +15

- Sword & claw +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)—40 damage Natural even hit: 15 ongoing negative energy damage. Miss: 20 damage
- R: Disruption blast +15 vs. PD (1 or 2 nearby or far away targets)—80 negative energy damage *Natural even hit*: The target loses the use of the escalation die until the end of its next turn.
- C: Web attack +15 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies in a group)— The target is hampered

Limited use: 1/round as a quick action, if the escalation die is even.



DROW AND ALLIES

Level	Role	Name	Summary	Size	Page
3	caster	drow spider-mage	spoiler-style spider leader	normal	13B: 58
3	mook	weaver swarm	dangerously hampering spider mooks (best not to level up!)	normal	13B: 61
4	mook	drow soldier	grunt with a hand crossbow	normal	13B: 58
4	troop	drow Joker blade	masked gang fighter	normal	CC: 93
5	caster	drow Joker spellslinger	troublesome masked spellcaster	normal	CC: 93
5	troop	drow sword maiden	comes alive when using her nastier specials	normal	13B: 58
6	caster	drider	underpowered core book caster; add 2 to its attacks and 1 to its defenses!	large	13A: 223
6	caster	drow spider-sorceress	more powerful version of the drow spider-mage	normal	13B: 59
6	mook	lokkris	dire wasps that get progressively more dangerous	normal	13B: 61
6	troop	drider secret taker	secret-stealing brute	large	BotU: 54
6	troop	drow sword adept	the Elf Queen's cruel champion	double-strength	CC: 112
6	troop	spider mount	web-spitting mount, unreliable if unmounted	normal	13B: 60
7	archer	drow darkbolt	evasive wall-crawling archer	normal	13B: 59
7	spoiler	venom-wracked drider	spreads the poison	large	BotU: 54
8	blocker	drow cave stalker	ravaged ravagers	normal	EST: 141
8	troop	drow mercenary	underworld and cave-fighting specialist	normal	CC: 39
8	troop	silver folk assassin	deadliest when fighting alongside melee-capable allies	normal	BotU: 53
9	caster	drow sorcerer captain	spellcaster unafraid of mixing it up in melee	normal	BotU: 53
9	wrecker	drider warrior	trained as both an elven spellcaster and a spidery killer	large	BotU: 54
9	wrecker	drow cavalry	spider-riding lancer	double-strength	13B: 59
10	caster	drow wizard	giving adventurers a taste of their own fireball-flavored medicine	normal	CC: 39
12	spoiler	Serin Vi, drow assassin	the silver folk's top assassin; name not required	triple-strength	FF: 128

DWARVEN RUINS

Pile Axis on Glitterhaegen, add Santa Cora on top, and multiply by a dwarven dozen and you still would not come close to the grandeur and sheer scale of the ancient civilization of Underhome.

However, the network of dwarven ingenuity, hard work, and iconic magic that helped the dwarves spread out across the entire underworld is now gone. Without the great synergies, most of what is left underground amounts to ruins. Abandoned by the dwarves; sacked by invading drow, orcs, demons, dragons, and kobolds; and crisscrossed by the weird tracks of living dungeons, the great caverns and innumerable smaller galleries are hard to identify with any certainty.

Despite the Dwarf King's decision to remain on the surface, at least for now, many dwarves are drawn to the ruins. Some, such as the Reclamation Guild (page 65) believe they can contribute to Underhome's restoration, despite the Dwarf King's orders. Others wish to locate Underhome's vanished wonders before someone else beats them to it.

13 Lost Wonders of Vnderhome

One of Underhome's most famous wonders—the Mechanical Sun—is presently stomping about between four warring kingdoms of the Underland. The fates of these other thirteen treasures and magical sites remain to be discovered:

1. The Fallen Star—a gemstone of innumerable facets and staggering beauty



- 2. The Golem-Forge—enchanted to bring the smiths' work to life
- **3.** The Axes of the Brothers Unbroken—sworn defenders of Underhome who never knew defeat
- 4. The Runestone Academy—where dwarven scholars mastered the sigils of creation
- 5. The Dark Brewery—where the fabled King's Own beer was brewed
- **6. The Petrified Zoo**—the Dwarf King of old could command anything in his domain to turn to stone
- 7. The Seven Oracles—ancestral spirits of the seven clans, each laboring under a terrible curse
- 8. The Castle of the Sleepers—where heroes rest until called by the King—and yet, they did not answer his call when Underhome fell?
- 9. The Titan's Armor—a huge, wondrous suit of mechanical armor that permits the wearer to wrestle giants and seamonsters
- **10. The Gemstone Orchard**—where enchanted trees bring forth emeralds and rubies like apples
- 11. The Horn of the Shaking Land—master of earthquakes
- **12. The Godswheel Temple**—where fate turns the cogs of the world
- **13. The Dwarf King's Crown**—stolen by a jealous relative during the chaos of the fall

The Real Enemy

If you pay attention to what the dwarves prefer not to talk about, you may notice that the *real* enemies of the dwarves in the underworld are frequently *other dwarves*. The Gold King? Undeniably a dwarf. Derro? Disturbingly dwarven.

You'll find more about both of these threats in 13th Age Bestiary 2. The derro entry, in particular, could change how you approach an underworld campaign. We avoid repeating ourselves by talking more about the derro here, but you'll find scattered derro quotes throughout this book—these are firstperson accounts of them making sense of your surroundings.

Exploring Dwarven Ruins

The Dwarf King objects to anyone taking treasure from *anywhere* in the lands below, but especially from formerly dwarven ruins. It's an open question whether the Dwarf King's objections matter.

Well, obviously, they sometimes matter. Places like Castle Homeguard (page 67) do what they can to hold the line; but looting dwarven ruins is not so different from looting anywhere else in the underworld. You get away with it whenever you can.

Often, the dwarves' paranoid building habits are the only things at all likely to stop you.

Murderous Dwarven Architecture

The dwarves weren't the only underworld denizens to build fortifications like these—other folk made similar preparations for war, often with their own wicked flourishes. Still, the dwarven names for such objects are commonly used across the underworld.

A dwarven wall may someday crumble, but its trap will still bite you from the rubble. Proverbial, don't you think?

Barbed Crawl: A crawl is an extremely narrow gap that travelers must crawl through on their bellies. The *barbed* part involves concealed steel blades in the narrowest parts, to slow or injure invaders.

Choke and Gate: The *choke* part involves collapsing or connecting tunnels so all traffic in a particular region gathers to a choke-point. The *gate* goes across the choke-point, which allows minimal defenders to control access to the area.

Murder Pit: A cave (often in front of a choke and gate) set up as a killing floor in some fashion. Maybe there's a ledge from which archers can shoot; maybe there are holes in the ceiling from which to drop stones and boiling oil; or maybe there's a big, toothy monster lurking nearby.

Ruckle: A pile of fallen boulders that almost—but not quite—blocks a passageway. The boulders rest atop one another in an unstable arrangement, so if you push on the wrong stone, the whole pile collapses. Dwarves are skilled at setting up ruckles that have only one way through.

Twinnel: A second, smaller tunnel that runs parallel to a larger one, which allows guards to spy on travelers or pass by unseen.

Watchpost: A hidden fort with multiple hidden exits and spy-holes so guards can keep watch on a strategic location.

Water Wall: A flooded tunnel that can be pumped clear (or a clear tunnel that can be flooded on command). Whoever has control of the pumps has control of the water wall.

ELEMENTAL ERRATICS

The deeper underworld connects to the elemental plane of earth; walk down one tunnel, and you leave the mortal world behind. Go deep enough, and one realm blurs into another, until the challenge becomes *not* landing in the earth plane.

However, the sheer magical pressure in the underworld sometimes causes portals to *other* elemental planes to pop open and deposit different elemental material. Fire erratics don't usually last long—the elemental fire mixes with stone to make lava, and then shoots up to the surface. If a mountain that was never previously a volcano suddenly erupts, it might be the result of a newly-formed fire erratic in the depths—and if no one goes down to choke off that fire portal, it'll keep erupting.

Water and air erratics tend to stay more contained, manifesting as churning freshwater lakes and howling whirlwinds, respectively. They're valuable assets in the underworld—clean water and fresh air can be hard to come by down here in the dark. Rarer and more dangerous are mobile erratics that blow through the underworld like hurricanes—bringing floods, wild winds, or firestorms with them as they go.

Erratics can cause a whole host of problems for adventurers to deal with, but elementals are the main one. Whenever an erratic

THE HALL OF VENGEANCE AND THE Axe of Seven Bloods

Everything will be all right, provided the Dwarf King does not unseal the Hall of Vengeance to retrieve the legendary Axe of Seven Bloods.

-13th Age core rulebook, page 17

Sooo... *can* the Dwarf King unseal the Hall and get the Axe? Is the Hall in Forge, or is it lost somewhere in the ruined world below? If it *is* in Forge, are there now *two* Halls of Vengeance—the original, abandoned Hall in the underworld, and the new Hall in Forge? Or was the Hall always in Forge, prompting the question, *"why did the dwarves build their Hall of Vengeance on the surface?"* Is the Hall of Vengeance a new thing they built *after* the loss of Underhome? If so, where did the Axe of Seven Bloods come from?

Also—the hall is *sealed*? Not just closed and locked, but *sealed*? Is that a ceremonial seal, that can only be broken by the agreement of the dwarven priests or nobles or some such? Or a magical seal, designed to keep malign influences at bay? Or a *physical* seal, because the Axe is tainted by the magic or poison that destroyed the dwarven civilization, so opening the Hall would mean releasing the same plague that destroyed Underhome?

Lots of questions. No real answers. Dwarves don't speak of such things.

Here's a couple adventure possibilities:

- The Hall is in Underhome: So, the ritual place where the Dwarf King would say, "now is the hour we kick ass together, my bearded brothers" is lost in the trackless wreckage below, rendered inaccessible by poisons and madness that overtake those who venture too deep. Does this mean the dwarves can't get the Axe and, therefore, can't declare war? Is that why they're having such trouble dealing with the Orc Lord? Is some force (*cough* drow *cough*) deliberately stopping them from retrieving the Axe, to keep them weak?
- The Hall is in Forge: The Axe is right there in the Dwarf King's basement, so he can whip it out at any time and start smashing. What's he waiting for? Is the Axe so devastating that he'll only use it when there's no alternative left? Or does the King have a particular purpose for the Axe in mind? Was vengeance mistranslated—is it actually Hall of Waiting For Those Bastard Elves To Drop Their Guard, And Then—THEN—We Shall Have Revenge For What They Did To Underhome?

forms, elementals come pouring out of it. It's unclear whether the erratics suck the elementals into our world or curiosity lures them here—or maybe the elementals simply use the erratics as invasion beachheads. At any rate, when a water erratic opens under a dwarven fort, the dwarves with soggy bottoms don't care *why* the water elementals geyser up from below. They just need someone to *deal* with the elementals.

And, as if the spontaneous elementals were not bad enough, the erratics also draw the attention of power-hungry elementalists, living dungeon death cults, and other magic users that seek the raw power of the planes for their own purposes.

Elemental Stats

13 True Ways first introduced champion-tier stats for the four standard elementals (pages 190-191).

Other useful monsters include:

- Elemental beasts (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 52)
- Flux elementals (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 76)
- Naiads (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 198)
- Salamanders (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 233)
- Xorn (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 288)
- Lightning elementals (*Shards of the Broken Sky*, page 129)
- Magma elementals (*Shards of the Broken Sky*, page 211)
- Twisted magma elementals (*Shards of the Broken Sky*, page 213).

THE GRAПD DISMAL SVMP

All the slimy foulness of the world sinks down and down, dripping and slithering until it pools in the Grand Dismal Sump. The sump is a seething, pestilent wilderness—a marsh of ooze and rot and fungus, glimmering with its own internal bioluminescence. It belches out dank miasmas that hang in the air, reducing visibility to next-to-nothing. Gunk drips from the ceiling, cascading down from ancient sewers and sluices far overhead. It's a treacherous place—one wrong step and you'll sink up to your neck in acidic slime or burst a puffer mushroom that shoots killer spores into your face.

There are pathways through the sump, though no one would call any of them exactly *safe*. The best ones are old dwarven roads—slimy stone arches raised slightly above the worst of the muck. The others—monster paths, tunnels hewed through the muck, and the banks of sludge rivers—are quite perilous. The denizens of the sump watch them all.

Troglodytes

Trog warbands control the interior of the sump. These aren't the scrawny trogs from the 13^{th} Age core rulebook; no, these are champion-tier trogs—like the trog fouler (a spoiler), trog shaman (a leader), and trog chieftain (another leader) from the 13^{th} Age Bestiary 2 (page 275).

You'll find plenty of leaders in the *Bestiary 2* entry, so we've added a few more follower-types here. We don't include a new mook because we think the 8th level trog underling mook from the *13th Age* core rulebook (page 247) makes a simply brutal champion-tier trog adversary.



For All Troglodytes

Trog stench: The scents trogs

spray stink so badly that other humanoids take penalties to all attacks, defenses, and saves when engaged with a troglodyte or when nearby three or more troglodytes. Non-humanoids usually aren't affected.

Humanoids affected by *trog stench* can make a normal save at the end of each turn (though they'll be taking a penalty). If the save succeeds, the humanoid ignores all trog stench for the rest of the battle.

- Trog stench penalties vary for different humanoid races:
- -4: Elves, gnolls, and gnomes
- -3: Humans, halflings, half-elves, holy ones, tieflings, and most everyone else
- -2: Half-orcs and dragonics
- -1: Dwarves
- -0: Forgeborn

TROG CHUCKER

The whistle of its laughter harmonizes with the whistle of its incoming spear.

Weakling 6th level archer [HUMANOID] Initiative: +10

Light club +12 vs. AC-7 damage

Miss: Damage equal to the penalty the trog's stench currently imposes on the target.

R: Javelin +12 vs. AC-10 damage

- *Irrational confidence:* Until damaged, this creature gains a +2 bonus to its attacks and deals +5 damage.
- *Chameleon:* Underground, in swamps, and in rivers, attacks against troglodytes by enemies who aren't engaged with them take a -4 penalty.

AC	20	
PD	20	HP 44
MD	16	

Trog Warrior

What this trog believes is a war cry, you'll experience as an incapacitating belch.

6th level troop [HUMANOID] Initiative: +8

Spiked club +10 vs. AC—24 damage

Miss: Damage equal to twice the penalty the trog's stench currently imposes on the target.

R: Javelin +10 vs. AC-20 damage

- *Solid charge:* If a trog warrior moves to engage an enemy, it inflicts an extra +2d6 damage on a successful hit.
- *Chameleon:* Underground, in swamps, and in rivers, attacks against troglodytes by enemies who aren't engaged with them take a -4 penalty.

AC	22	
PD	20	HP 88
MD	16	

FUNGALOIDS

Fungaloid realms of varying size—from petty groves to vast sprawling colonies—dot the sump's fringes. The fungaloids possess many distinctive traits, the most valuable in this context is they can safely live in close proximity to their trog neighbors, and even hire trog war bands as mercenaries in skirmishes between fungal kingdoms. (The fungaloids' internal politics are utterly incomprehensible to non-mushrooms; their disputes appear to be mostly over cap texture and striations.)

Most Grand Dismal Sump fungaloids are immensely wealthy—their mushroom farms produce huge amounts of food, which they export to the other underworld kingdoms. Farming is trivially easy for the fungaloids, though it's the equivalent of humans raising their own relatives for slaughter. The fungaloids primarily trade with the drow, but sometimes they entertain ambassadors from other nations.

Double 'em: The fungaloids from the 13th Age Bestiary (page 82) can work great in the Grand Dismal Sump—just add 3 levels to each of them using the procedure we outline on page 6 for leveling-up a monster. Use the champion-tier fungal attacks below instead of the adventurer-tier fungal attacks from the 13th Age Bestiary.

New fungaloids: The fungaloid drudge (13th Age Bestiary, page 84) works fine when leveled-up to 6th level; however, these fungaloids are exceedingly rich—what might have grown as drudges elsewhere could turn out to be a number of mushroom farmers here.

Additionally, we introduce the mushroom warrior and death capo here to fill out the mixed trog/fungaloid warbands that dominate the sump.

Champion-Tier Fungal Attacks

Some fungaloids can make special attacks, usually triggered with a natural 16+ attack roll, though the attacks can be used as a standard action too in some cases. When building fungaloid battles, decide what sort of attack or attacks these fungaloids have. The monster entries will tell you how many attacks to pick. Add the fungaloid creature's level to attacks and damage, as indicated.

- **C:** Poison tentacles 8 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—8 + level poison damage, and the target is vulnerable to *fungal attacks*
- **C:** Brown noise 8 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—8 + level ongoing thunder damage
- **C:** Hallucinogenia 6 + level vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—The target is confused (easy save ends, 6+)
- C: Infectious spores 8 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—8 + level ongoing poison damage
- **C:** Piercing shriek 8 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 + level psychic damage

MUSHROOM WARRIOR

A compelling argument for staying out of the sump.

6th level blocker [нималоіd] Initiative: +10

- Jabby spear +12 vs. AC (or +9 vs. AC vs. a nearby enemy)—18 damage
- Fungal Attacks-Make ONE fungal attack
- *Doubly fungal:* The mushroom warrior possesses two fungal attacks and can choose which to use each time it uses *fungal attack*.
- *Reactionary:* The first time the mushroom warrior is hit by an enemy attack each round, it gains the ability to make a *fungal attack* on its next turn as a quick action.
- *Fog of spore:* Enemies attempting to disengage from the mushroom warrior have a –5 penalty to their disengage checks.

AC	21	
PD	19	HP 90
MD	17	

MUSHROOM FARMER

Growing mushrooms in the sump isn't a problem. The real trick is fighting off the creatures that want an early dinner.

Weakling 7th level troop [PLANT] Initiative: +10

Forked spear +13 vs. AC-13 damage

- *Natural 2-3:* Add a new mushroom farmer to the battle; it springs up near this creature or comes in from outside the battle. The new mushroom farmer can move this turn, but cannot attack.
- *Natural 16+:* The farmer can make a *fungal attack* this turn as a quick action.

Fungal attack—Make ONE fungal attack (half normal damage)

AC	24	
PD	21	HP 44
MD	17	

Death Capo

Fungaloids don't generally eat meat, but they'll let it rot in the planting beds if it's been seasoned by a death capo.

7th level leader [PLANT] Initiative: +12

Serrated axe +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)-12 damage

Natural even hit or miss: 10 ongoing poison damage

Poof: When the death capo is hit by an attack against AC, each nearby enemy taking ongoing poison damage has that damage increased by 5, and each nearby fungaloid or troglodyte ally gains 5 temporary hit points OR gains the ability to make one of its *fungal attacks* as a quick action on its next turn.

AC	22	
PD	22	HP 120
MD	19	

I3 Locations in the Grand Dismal Sump

- 1. Port Snail: A former Dwarven city (Port Moraine), now shared by trogs and fungaloids. The dwarves built this fortress against enemies of previous ages. Some of the antiaerial defenses are still visible under the fungal growths covering the ancient battlements. Trade ships dock here from the parts of the underworld that can be navigated by water; the port's name comes from the slimy trail ships cut in the water when departing the fungus-coated docks. The master of the port is a renegade dwarf, Uldin Helmsmith; he made his fortune fashioning breathing masks for visitors to the sump.
- Throne of the Trog High Queen: There hasn't been a High Queen of the trogs in decades—any time a contender arises,



they're brought down by an alliance of rival trog bands or dark elf assassins. Should a challenger wish to claim the title, they must bring their warband to the throne atop this foul hill, declare their right to the throne by placing a ritual dwarf-fat candle atop it, and hold the hill until the torch burns down. It would probably also help to be a troglodyte, but who can say?

- 3. Trog Oracle: Trogs perform divination rituals by throwing semi-complete skeletons into oracle pits. The slime colonies and molds in the pit produce fantastic shapes around the bones, which trog shamans then interpret. There's not much here for non-trogs to interact with; but, occasionally, some lingering necromantic energy in the underworld allows the bones to retain some recollection of their original life and regain locomotion and will, instead of gently subsiding into fungal display. Trogs outside the Dismal Sump would destroy such freaks, but, in these parts, the trogs have learned to gift the newcomers to the fungaloids. So, perhaps the person the adventurers thought lost to the troglodytes isn't entirely dead yet?
- 4. Pillars of the Hermits: Several dozen stone pillars rise at unlikely angles from the marsh here, and atop each pillar sits a hermit. Most are humanoid, a few are human. The combination of isolation, desolation, and nearly unbreathable air is apparently conducive to mystic visions the hermits spout prophecies amidst their babbling, ranting, and complaining about the smell. A small cottage industry of scribes, interpreters, perfumers, and hostels has sprung up at the base of the pillars, catering to pilgrims who cross the sump seeking an oracle.

- 5. Mudlarks and Sifters: Small, heavily fortified homesteads dot this part of the sump. Those who live here pan the slime rivers for gold and other treasures that wash down from the underworld's upper reaches. These are a hardy folk—they have to be, to survive regular attacks by trog war bands. They rarely appreciate visits from outsiders, unless said outsiders are willing to lend their swords to the fight against the eternal enemy.
- 6. The Gates of the Steel Rose: This fortress is a Drowfort outpost (page 52). It fulfills the same purpose Port Snail did for other enemies—it keeps the majority of the trogs and fungaloids penned up inside the Grand Dismal Sump. Trog and fungaloid warbands often besiege the fort, hurling bladders filled with poisonous spores or directing tides of acidic slimes toward the walls. Blasé drow warriors note the trogs and fungaloids don't seem serious about the attacks; it's more like they're just going through the motions to stay in practice. So far, the Steel Rose remains inviolate.
- Fungaloid Farms: Fungaloids are, well, fungi. There's a thin 7. line between farmer and crop here-and farmer and guard dog. It's just as easy for the fungaloids to direct poisonous mushrooms and carnivorous slimes to grow on the perimeter of their weird farms as it is for them to command fruiting bodies to bring forth a tidal wave of mushrooms for human consumption. Explorers who manage to bypass these guardian monsters report sighting bizarre prison camps and laboratories where fungaloids experiment on humans and other mammalians. It's possible these tests are just to ensure the farms' products are edible; it's also possible the fungaloids have more sinister schemes sprouting in their vegetable minds-plans to addict humans to soporific fungi, or to adulterate the food crops with some poison or biological weapon. The fungaloids are nothing if not patient.
- 8. Fungaloid City: So far as non-fungaloids know, no explorer has ever reached this city—it's only ever been seen from a distance, because the terrain around it is full of monsters and traps. The city looks to be as grand as any metropolis on the surface, but it's only lightly inhabited. Most curious of all, the *shape* of the city seems to have changed over the ages. The oldest accounts suggest it resembled the Wizard King's old capital of Omen; more recently, it resembles the outline of Axis or Santa Cora.
- 9. The Rust Waste: Some time before the fall of Underhome, the Dwarf King launched a massive offensive to wipe out the troglodytes. A great dwarven army, together with golems and all manner of war machines and siege engines, landed at Port Moraine and marched east. The invasion went horribly wrong when the fungaloids objected to the dwarven invaders and joined the conflict on the trogs' side (the dwarves have always suspected the drow were behind this sudden change of whatever the fungal equivalent of a heart is). To this day, the sump's fetid landscape is scarred by the memory of this slaughter—all the rusted dwarven steel turns the fungi rustbrown or metallic. The Rust Waste is sometimes a place of pilgrimage for bitter, vengeance-seeking dwarves who somehow don't have better things to feel vengeful about.
- 10. Stilt Villages of the Claw Tribe: The inhabitants of these villages are descendants of slaves who escaped from the

drow long ago. Most of the escaped slaves were killed and devoured by trogs; only those desperate and tough enough to find ways to endure the constant trog attacks survived. Their solution was chuul-flavored—they now live in a precarious balance between being eaten by chuul or eaten by trogs. They survive thanks to reckless harvesting of chuul symbiote magic items, like those described in the *13*th Age Bestiary (page 49).

- 11. Temple of the Plague Goddess: One of the Dark Gods—a patron deity of illness and corruption—has her temple here. She's a goddess of both physical and fiscal corruption, in that she's open to bribes. The troglodytes, drow, and fungaloids agree on only two things: the underworld doesn't need any more plagues at this moment, but they would prefer to keep the goddess around in case they need her later. So, they more or less cooperate to keep petitioners from the surface world away from the temple, or bribe the goddess to focus on making her surface world visitors ill.
- **12. Otyughia:** The region known as Otyughia is a jungle of pale, branching growths that might look like trees and might look like tentacles. Ancient tales insist the *jungle* is actually a gigantic, buried otyugh. Ancient tales are correct.
- **13.** The Wanderer's Barge: Aeons ago, a powerful Lich Prince of the Necropolis lost his phylactery—the magic . . . thingy that contained his soul. (It's been so long; he cannot quite recall precisely what form his phylactery took. He's certain it was shiny and magic.)

All lost things eventually end up in the sump, so he came here to search for it. He's been looking for centuries. The Wanderer commands a huge barge or sled that an army of zombies drags across the slime dunes. Undead purple worms slither ahead of the barge, chewing up the fetid marsh and sifting through it for the missing phylactery. The Wanderer is starved for conversation and company, so adventurers in need of a place to rest may find an unexpectedly warm welcome on the barge . . . at least, until the conversation turns to magic items—especially those of mysterious provenance. Are you quite certain you're not holding the Wanderer's phylactery? (GM, you may now turn to page 135 of the 13th Age Bestiary.)

THE FOUR KINGDOMS OF THE MECHANICAL SUN

In ages past, the dwarves forged the Mechanical Sun. This incredible artifact is a globe of crystallized flame, which sheds warmth and light in the same manner as the surface sun. Four golden golems carry the globe, marching tirelessly through the underworld like artificial Koru behemoths. The golems' path is marked by magical waystones, which can be adjusted to change the sun's speed and direction. The dwarves of old were able to forge spring and summer, autumn and winter, and night and day as they desired by means of these waystones. The Mechanical Sun ensured the dwarves' farm caves were more bountiful than any surface farmland. After Underhome fell, the sun-bearer golems continued to march around and around, following the last waystones set for them. Dawn and dusk continued to come to the dead city, though there was no one left to see it, and so it was for an age or more.

Then, four kingdoms arose in the underworld, each of which coveted the Mechanical Sun. Scholars from each kingdom discovered they could use the magical waystones to change the golems' path, guide the sun into their kingdom, and gain the benefits of its magical light. They could grow crops in great profusion, fend off the underworld's leeching chill with the sun's light, or tap the sun's magic to fuel their own spells. The original kingdoms fell long ago—victims of their own wars, internal betrayals, and random deaths in the cold darkness of the Deeps. Each kingdom's territory passed on to a successor, sometimes immediately, sometimes decades later. The territories remain more or less the same, but the four warring kingdoms change with the turning of the ages. Currently, they are as follows:

- The crazed wizards of the Magocracy Unfettered
- The paranoid Queendom of Voth
- The vengeful dwarves of the Reclamation Guild
- The reptilian kings of the Serpent Catacombs

One reason the territories remain constant while the kingdoms' identities shift is that no one can move the waystones themselves—they are embedded in the stone of the underworld. The kingdoms can reorient the stones to change the sun golems' route, but the stones no longer function when removed. So, the conflict between the four kingdoms remains clear—each faction wants to seize control of the waystones to redirect the golems into their domain, and to prevent others from sabotaging the golems' programmed paths and stealing the sun away again.

Outsiders?: Sometimes, the warring factions close their borders and rely only on themselves; other times, they send envoys out into the Deeps, seeking powerful allies to surprise their enemies. The old wizened figure in the corner of the *Ettercap's Web* tavern or the *Elf Queen's Silver* inn? They're agents from the Four Kingdoms, looking for powerful (or naïve) associates to help recover waystones, search the ruins of previous fortifications for relics, or discover the location of lost *command runes*....

Dwarven runes command the waystones; of course, many of the command runes were lost when Underhome fell. It's possible an adventuring group could obtain such runes without even knowing what they possess.

THE MECHANICAL SUN

The Mechanical Sun is an artifact, wrought from imperishable crystal and magical metal—it is (so far) indestructible and eternal. Plates of metal scored with runes orbit the crystal core. Sometimes, dark shapes—like worms or clouds—appear within the globe, but it's usually as pure and bright as a flame.

The light from the sun is marvelously strange; it flows like liquid, pouring around corners and spilling over obstacles. It even lingers in some places—gathering in rockpools, ancient dwarven lamps, and light-basins—continuing to glimmer for weeks after the sun has passed. The light can be as warm as the summer sun, but the heat does not appreciably differ in intensity, no matter how far away from the globe it falls. Thus, someone standing right next to the globe feels the same heat as someone fifty miles away. The globe's light and heat both stop abruptly at the edge of the area of effect.

SUNBEARER GOLEMS

The four sunbearer golems, which resemble bearded giants, are made from the same invulnerable metal as the globe's housing. They carry the globe on two long poles that rest on their shoulders; their other hands carry hammers or swords. Only twice in recorded history have they laid down their burden once to rescue one of their number who fell into a pit, and once to battle an underkraken. The titanic golems are among the mightiest entities to walk the underworld—and that's *before* any discussion of the magical sun they carry, which is a worldchanging (or age-ending) artifact in itself.

Adventurers in the Hollow Realm may come across the golems, carrying their sun and walking inexorably toward a controlling kingdom. You can usually feel the golems coming long before the light finds its way around a corner or through a tunnel. If the golems are coming your way and you're on the waystone path, find a side tunnel—the sunbearer golems pay less attention to what's underfoot than the Koru behemoths, and that's saying something.

Manipulating a Waystone

Waystones are obelisks of greenish stone, twice as tall as a dwarf. They're typically found at corridor junctions, which makes them a prime location for an old adventuring camp or an encounter with whomever is trying to manipulate them. The crystal atop the obelisk relays commands to the sunbearer golems, telling them to turn, continue straight, go slower, or go swifter. The waystones are old and are starting to go haywiresometimes, a waystone picks up an idle comment or a stray dream as an intended command, even without a command rune. The golems are mindless, but not so simple as to only obey the last command given by the nearest waystone-if many other waystones all broadcast the same instruction, the golems pay heed to that, instead. Thus, if one of the four kingdoms captures the Mechanical Sun, the other three kingdoms could possibly band together to override the golems' commands, sending the sun careening off through the underworld. Often as not, the four kingdoms employ mercenaries and adventurers to sneak into their rivals' territories to steal the sun.

The Magocracy Vπfettered

It's hard to be an evil wizard. First of all, becoming a wizard often means going to school in Horizon, which entails putting up with the Archmage's rules and restrictions. Oh, the Archmage claims to allow all manner of magical experimentation, and he won't bat an eyelid if you crossbreed owls and bears, enchant a raincloud so



it rains buttered toast, or accidentally blow up a small mountain with your experimental spell. But, defy his commands—say, by opening up portals to other dimensions, meddling with history, or reading any of the forbidden tomes—and you're out.

And even if you manage to conceal your ambition long enough to establish your tower—your dungeon full of eldritch horrors—the moment you start turning peasants inside out, the pesky, meddling adventurers appear. It's enough to make the most patient and accommodating evil wizard throw his hands up and start casting *fireball*.

There is a better plan: go to the land of the Magocracy Unfettered. Here, in the depths, you'll find a cave where you can build your tower in peace; conduct your unholy, deranged, horrific experiments; and meet with fellow evil wizards for tea and book groups.

The caverns of the Magocracy are infested with bizarre magical creations—hybrid monsters, transmuted oozes, failed golems, rotten bits of necromancy, and extradimensional creatures that were hauled into reality and forced to downshift to crude matter as best they could. Each cave has one or more wizard's towers, where the mages experiment. Many of these towers have special magical antennae or crystals that draw arcane power from the Mechanical Sun and channel it into the resident wizards' spells.

The closest thing the Magocracy has to a government—or, really, a civil service—is the Servitors' Association, a club of apprentices, henchmen, facilitators, and, well, minions who take care of their masters' needs. The Servitors' Association gathers resources and ensures the flow of supplies, coordinates mutual defense of the caverns, initiates trades with neighbors, and handles all the other odd jobs beneath the notice of the absentminded wizards. They sell off magic items and other byproducts of arcane research to fund their operating costs. They also recruit new wizards (usually from the surface or from the Arcane Academy, page 23) whenever a tower becomes available due to magical mishap.

As a whole, the Magocracy has enough magical firepower to take on virtually any foe. However, herding wizards is a lot like herding cats (if the cats could slip between dimensions or throw lightning bolts at will); therefore, it's unlikely the Magocracy will conquer the world anytime soon.

Icons & the Magocracy

The Archmage often dispatches adventurers to spy on the Magocracy. Of course, as the Magocracy would detect and destroy any *known* spies of the Archmage, he carefully wipes the memories of his agents, burying his commands deep in their minds. These instructions surface as subliminal messages, bizarre bad luck, or odd compulsions to go down *that* corridor instead of this one.

Meanwhile, the Crusader and the Diabolist agree on something for once: they both love the Magocracy. Its flagrant disregard for the Archmage speaks to both icons. True alliances with the Magocracy are impossible, at least for now; so, agents of the Crusader and the Diabolist compete with each other for the best deals.

13 Notable Magocrats

We list each magocrat below with their most loyal servitor (in parentheses), as well as a sample boon or piece of information the magocrat might provide if persuaded by great service.

- 1. Azoroth the Pyromancer, She Who Shall Bathe the Land in Flame (Srskis the Salamander). *The true names of devils.*
- 2. The Keeper of the Purple Staff, the Dread Soul Keeper, the Ghost Eater (Igor the Chiropractor). *Icon relationships from past or future ages.*
- 3. Flandis of the Flying Tower (Kristoff the Flying Monkey). *Remarkable animal companions.*
- 4. The Talking Skull of Iblis the Undying (Bertram, Bearer of the Velvet Throne). *Otherworldly fashions.*
- 5. Orgrimus the Reality-Butcher, He Who Flays the Skin of the World and Wears it as a Hat (Porgu, last survivor of the Penguin Empire). *Efficacious megalomania medicinals.*
- 6. Hadrim the Green Sorcerer, Viridian King, Emerald Sage, Glaucous Sorcerer (Miriel, Keeper of the Thesaurus). Broken spells imported from other dimensions. Not bad broken; good broken.
- 7. The Dweller in the Amber Chamber, Ceaseless Scribe of Arcane Truths (Lemuel the Collator). *Alternate histories that don't stay alternate.*
- 8. Arascin, Sorceress of Teeth, Mistress of the Eyebite, Lady of the White Tower (Tooth Golem). *Barbeque Koru.*
- 9. The Triune Sisters, Keepers of the Eye of Elucidation, The Cryptic Book, and the Wand of Manifest Will (Kolbitar the Skivvy). *Makeovers*.
- 10. Seven Thronged Paths, Exiled from the Overworld, Prismatic Prince (Jervus the Reliable). *Demi-deification*.
- 11. Glimnir Glimmerdottir, Gnomish Philosopher-Militant, Denier of Illusion, Terrible Revelator (Obsin the Obsequious). *Bazaar of the bizarre.*
- 12. Mechanor, the Wizard of the Forge, Father of Golems, Master-Smith of Wonders (Len Off-a-Cart, Scrap Merchant). *Artifacts!*
- 13. The Unnamable One, the Mindvoid, the Antimage (Tomas the Eternal Apprentice). *Best avoided, unless you want to speak with Tomas.*

THE QUEENDOM OF VOTH

Voth was founded by human exiles from the surface—they fled the Dragon Empire during some forgotten catastrophe and took shelter in the underworld. Over time, they found their way to this tremendous cavern, where a dark sea full of pale, eyeless fish sustained them while they made a new home in the deep. Light is so precious in Voth that it's used as currency—they value things in candle-inches, rather than gold pieces.

In the tradition of Voth, the Emperor is a monstrous tyrant who rules the surface with an iron fist. The Vothi are, therefore, paranoid that Imperial agents from the surface might sneak down from above to sow dissent or perform acts of sabotage. They mistrust strangers from the surface unless they are clearly enemies of the Emperor, and they tend to blame any misfortune or accidents on Imperial saboteurs. Most adventuring parties suffer more from this distrust than benefit from it, but a PC that has a negative icon relationship with the Emperor may have found a temporary home.

Voth is ruled by a council of ministers, the head of which is the Radiant Queen—either a priestess of the Gods of Light, a chosen vessel of divine power, or a former adventurer on the path to icon-hood. Whatever the truth, she glows from within like a holy beacon. The Radiant Queen's light fills the city of Refuge, even when the Mechanical Sun is far away. During these dark times, the common people of Voth crowd into Refuge, and live



off mushrooms, cave fish, and the contents of the granaries and storehouses, while the army goes off to hunt the sun.

Contrary to what the Emperor's loyalists would have you believe, Vothi warriors have remarkable courage and discipline. Perhaps there could be a way to finally bridge the distrust?

13 SECRETS OF VOTH

- 1. If it were not for trade with the silver folk, dwarves, and ettercaps, Voth would starve to death. Despite their hatred and mistrust of the surface, most of this food ultimately comes from the Empire.
- Voth's storehouses are guarded by all manner of traps and monsters, making them gigantic, if somewhat disappointing, dungeons—the *treasure* here is mostly grain and mushrooms.
- 3. An ancient law forbids spellcasters from casting *light* spells without a license; the Vothi economy is based on light, so magical light is heavily regulated. Outsiders who cast *light* spells may be arrested for breaking this law.
- 4. The wizards of Voth do have one trick that hasn't reached the surface—they know a simple spell that turns shadows solid, which allows them to make walls and other structures out of congealed darkness. Light causes these solid shadows to melt, much like fire does to ice. Still, these shadow walls guard Voth when the sun goes away.
- 5. While most Vothi retreat to Refuge in times of darkness, the lowest caste—the unseen—tend to the mushroom farms and keep the villages free of monsters. The unseen have learned to make ultrasonic chirps (like bats) to echolocate, so they can navigate in the dark. Unseen bards can even chirp magical songs that only their fellow laborers in the dark can hear.
- 6. The Black Dragon has a secret monastery in Voth, where her assassins learn to move and kill in complete darkness. It operates only during the dark times—when the Mechanical Sun returns, the assassins sneak away.
- 7. The soldiers of Voth rely on magical potions to sustain them on their long expeditions in the underworld to find the sun. These potions provide sustenance, remove fatigue, sharpen reflexes—and are highly addictive. Thus, Voth ensures the loyalty of its armies.
- 8. While the Gods of Light choose the ruler of Voth, the Dark Gods have their temples here, too. Only the city of Refuge, which is blessed with eternal light, is free of their corruption; in other parts of Voth, the dark temples reopen during the dark times.
- 9. There are lots of dangerous things in the darkness: assassins, crazed ultrasonic bards, cultists, wandering monsters. However, there are also cute shadow brownies—fey creatures who slip in and tend to empty houses during the dark times.
- 10. Because light is so important in Voth, lamps and lanterns are incorporated into all items of importance. The Vothi wear ornate head-dresses and helms studded with candlesticks and glowing stones. You can spot Vothi royalty at a distance, since they are accompanied by ceremonial lamp-bearers and mirror-carriers.
- 11. Shadowport is the one surface world town Vothi regularly visit—after all, the criminal town is more-or-less outside

Imperial jurisdiction. Rumors that there's a connection between the Prince of Shadows and Voth are . . . certainly plausible.

- 12. The current Radiant Queen is only six years old, so the council of ministers rule Voth in her name. She's rarely permitted out in public, so Refuge has less of her magical light than usual.
- 13. The previous Radiant Queen abdicated her throne and vanished into the underworld. Those who follow the new Queen say she perished in the wilderness; the devout claim she followed the commands of the Gods of Light, and climbed to the surface, where she took on a new title and purpose

Тне İnflvencing Engines

I want to tell you a secret. I'm not a person. This thing you see in front of you, it's just a meat suit. A puppet. A glove. I'm really far away, operating this derro by remote control. I'm really a pattern of thought, a being of frozen light who lives in the great machines under the earth. It's wonderful down here—we never die, and chase each other at the speed of thought through the glittering mazes. All knowledge is available to us—we spiral forever in ever-more-joyous patterns, and when we want another amusement, we put on suits of flesh and play at being lower beings.

So, why am I here talking to you through this ugly meat puppet? Well, I have another secret. You're just like me. You're a pattern of light too, an immortal being of pure thought. But you've gotten entangled in your flesh puppet. You can't take off your glove. You've forgotten that it's only supposed to be a game, forgotten what you really are.

But that's all right. I can set you free. I'll cut you free. I've a knife right here.

-a derro speaks

The Reclamation Guild

The Reclamation Guild is a breakaway sect of dwarves who defied their king's command and went down into the deeper underworld to reclaim the lost empire. They don't consider themselves renegades per se—they have every intention of returning the dwarven homeland to the Dwarf King when it's reclaimed. They just don't want to wait to go home.

The original Reclaimers probably left Forge centuries ago, defying the orders of the Dwarf King of that era. They migrated in a great procession down to these caverns, which were formerly part of the main dwarven empire, to start a task they knew would take many lifetimes. In the centuries or ages since the original descent, many surface-dwelling dwarves have joined the Reclaimers' efforts, attracted by the promise of reclaiming lost glory. Not coincidentally, there's some carefully cultivated confusion about the Guild's goals and current activities. Historically, the dwarves used the word *Underhome* to refer to the entirety of their deep-sprawling underworld empire. Humans, not quite understanding just how big the dwarven empire was, sometimes use the word *Underhome* to refer to a putative dwarven capital. That's not at all accurate; various Dwarf Kings and Dwarf Queens used entirely different portions of the empire as their capital at different times. Still, some dwarves in the current age have fallen into the trap of thinking like humans, believing the Reclamation Guild is somehow digging into the singular central dwarven city. It's almost certainly not true, though they may be digging up a major city of some sort.

In fact, you should go ahead and decide on the original name for the great city into which the Reclamation Guild is busy digging, or ask one of your dwarven PCs to do it. Depending on the Reclamation Guild's paranoia level and relationship with surface-dwellers, it seems likely they would only start advertising the true name of their dig if it was likely to benefit them somehow.

Home turf: The Reclamation Guild believes the Mechanical Sun (page 62) is a treasure of the dwarven empire, and must be returned to them. They've got a considerable advantage over their rivals, as the waystones were made with dwarven magic and respond more willingly to dwarven commands. Of course, their rivals heavily outnumber the dwarves, so it usually evens out.

The amount of territory the Reclaimers hold is not a reflection of their numbers or their strength—it's more like the other underworld denizens consider the Reclaimers' caverns as dangerous and corrupted as the rest of Underhome. This is worth remembering if the adventurers are enjoying the respite of one of this kingdom's truly-dwarven taverns or looking to buy potions from an alchemist. The dwarves do what they can to make their turf feel like a proper dwarven kingdom, but sometimes that comes at the expense of covering up outbreaks of madness, monster attacks, and mysterious magical phenomena typical of zones splashed by chaos.

Speaking of chaos: Depending on how you want to use this subterranean dwarven realm, it could be a half-okay place for the adventurers to hang out, or an utterly paranoid tyranny. The Calling (page 10) is, of course, a constant threat to the Reclaimers. They've developed various ways to protect themselves against it—from spells and curative potions to sealed suits of mechanical armor—but they still fear its lure.

Paranoid destroyers?: Here's an option—if you want the Reclaimers to start off as paranoid enemies of all but the dwarfiest PCs, have them view any strangers as possible carriers of the Calling. If you go this route, the Reclaimers attempt to imprison anyone who trespasses (read: enters) into their realm in vaults designed to contain and eradicate the Calling. After all, strangers might also be in league with the Reclaimers' many enemies—enemies who fear the return of the dwarves. Or, they might be agents of the hated dark elves, or some other foe. Down into the dungeon vaults with them, too.

Wait, *dungeon* vaults? Yes, the Reclamation Guild converted many formerly great dwarven palaces and citadels into trapfilled dungeons, where they can test strangers' lies with honest dwarven steel. *Kinder/gentler?:* Or perhaps your world doesn't need another hostile group of paranoid dwarves. Maybe the Guild is only intermittently inclined to *jail-everyone-and-let-the-dungeon-sort-them-out*.

Personages: The Reclaimers' current guildmaster is **Craggen Redhallow**, but he has heard the Calling and doesn't have long before it is too much for him to resist. He fears none of his replacements have the mettle to guide the Reclaimers through the trials to come, so he secretly bargained with necromancers from the Magocracy to turn him into a lich (as a temporary measure, he insists) until a suitable heir arises. He believes becoming a lich will end the Calling's whispers. He also believes this entire cluster of bad ideas is his own plan—after all, why would the voices whispering into his soul tell him how to get free?

13 Ways in Which the Guild Needs Assistance

- 1. Culling the Called: The Reclaimers are terrified of anyone under the Calling's influence. Perhaps they hire vetted adventurers to act as neutral inquisitors. Of course, neutral isn't a word that usually applies to PCs
- 2. Chasing the Mechanical Sun: Like the other three kingdoms, the Reclamation Guild seeks the Mechanical Sun (and unlike the other three kingdoms, they have a valid claim to the ancient dwarven, dammit!) Seizing waystones is hard for the Guild, though—their numbers are few, and dwarves are feared and hated in this part of the underworld.
- 3. Secrets of the Mechanical Sun: More ambitiously, the Guild has plans to use the Mechanical Sun to light the way to a new day for Underhome, or whatever the name of their city is. They know they will never succeed unless they have the Mechanical Sun wholly under their control. Craggen Redhallow believes he knows how to accomplish this—if the interlopers of the four kingdoms are using the waystones to control the sunbearer golems, he must destroy the magic of the waystones!
- 4. Countering the Derro: Ever since the Guild returned to the underworld, some dwarves have suggested they enter a loose alliance with the hateful derro, in defiance of the Dwarf King's commands. After all, the derro are particularly suited for work in the underworld. The derro, coincidentally, love this idea. Derro warriors and hunters constantly shout their support for this idea to any Guild members they encounter (it is hard to understand them over all the screaming, though). Guildmaster Redhallow used to fear a derro plot to overthrow the Guild. But lately, derro gibbering has started to make more and more sense.
- 5. Slaying the Gold King: The Reclaimers' attempt to take back Underhome is not the first. The Gold King (13th Age Bestiary 2, page 112) led a previous and doomed expedition. When it failed, it drove the Gold King mad; the ancient icon still roams the deepest parts of the underworld, attacking all interlopers. The Reclamation Guild tried to slay the former icon six times; and six times, they failed. They are stubborn, but not suicidal; they've started looking into outsourcing this problem.
- 6. The Ghost of the Temple Quarter: An undead creature with great power guards what the Guild believes are the

temple quarter and the tombs of Underhome. (They're Underhome temples and tombs, right enough; but, as we explained earlier, some of the Reclaimers are mistaken about what *Underhome* is, exactly.) The Guild isn't certain what sort of monster it is. Some guess it's a vengeful spirit sent by the assembled ancestral gods, a manifestation of their wrath at the loss of the dwarven empire. Others fear it's an emissary of the Lich King, plotting to take advantage of the largest mass grave in all the world.

- 7. The Ghost of the World's Forge: Another undead entity commands a great forge the dwarves stumbled on during their explorations. This undead creature has forged itself an army of servitors, including haunted suits of armor, swords wielded by invisible ghosts, and piles of slag animated by evil. (If you're using forgeborn in your campaign, this monster might be an evil forgeborn titan instead of an undead creature).
- 8. Chasing the Thieves: Thieves from the surface broke into the Reclamation Guild's vaults, taking treasures they recently recovered from the underworld. These thieves must be found and punished, preferably without the Dwarf King finding out about the treasures.
- **9. Smuggling the Runewright's Crown:** A year ago, the Reclamation Guild recovered a great treasure from the ruins—an ancient Crown of the Runewright. There are dwarf-lords in Forge who'd pay a king's ransom (a proper Dwarf King, not a cheap human king you can buy for half a tower) for this Crown, and the Guild could certainly use the resources and support. So, they need someone to smuggle the Crown into Forge, right under the Dwarf King's nose ...
- **10. Escorting the Called:** There's always a need for adventurers to escort bands of sick, half-sane dwarves back to the surface for some medicinal sunlight.
- 11. Reclaiming the Mines: Mines extend far beneath the city the Reclaimers are digging out; they run all the way down into the fabled Deeps. Finding a route into the mines that bypasses the regions controlled by the derro and drow could go a long way to help the Guild's cause—they'd be able to attract more dwarves from the surface to work those mines, as the mines aren't under the Dwarf King's ban.
- **12. Craggen's Phylactery:** If Craggen Redhallow becomes a lich, he'll need a vessel for his soul, which means a trip to the Necropolis. What tribute will the Lich King demand from the dwarves?
- **13. Better Yet:** There might yet be sane members of the Guild who would appreciate outside help eliminating their currently insane leadership as gently, but certainly, as possible.

CASTLE HOMEGUARD

Adventurers wanted: Homeguard caravan escorts. Excellent rates paid; plus, a discount on fees due to the Dwarf King for any underworld treasures reclaimed.

Aware that the Reclamation Guild may stir up more trouble than they're worth, or possibly intent on recovering the best of their finds, the Dwarf King maintains a fortress in the area, called Castle Homeguard. The soldiers here are supposed to prevent intruders from looting the ruins of Underhome and investigate the possibility of reclaiming Underhome, one ruined city at a time. However, the King's dwarves were under constant attack from the first day they arrived from Forge. The other powers of the underworld remember the dwarven empire of old, and they have no intention of allowing the Dwarf King to rebuild his realm without a fight.

The current Castle Homeguard is at least the third fortress to bear the same name (some troublemakers claim it's the thirteenth, and the Dwarf King covered up the destruction of ten other forts to bolster the dwarves' morale). Officially, Castle Homeguard is hostile toward the Reclamation Guild—a rival faction of dwarven exiles from Forge who defied the Dwarf King's commands and returned to the underworld. However, in practice, the two groups of dwarves must rely on each other in times of need. The Reclaimers know their way around the underworld better than the Homeguard troops, but Castle Homeguard has supplies the Reclaimers need.

Homeguard's supply lines run all the way back up to Forge the caves around it are generally too monster-infested to cultivate in any sort of way, and the Dwarf King frowns on getting involved in the squabbles over the Mechanical Sun. Regular caravans make their way down from Forge, bringing fresh food, fresh equipment, and fresh troops for the endless war. Sometimes, the caravans return empty; sometimes, they're laden with treasure brought out of the ruins. (And sometimes, they don't return at all, except for maybe one wild-eyed caravan guard who stumbles out of the depths, ranting about mushrooms with teeth or giant snakes).

The current commander of Castle Homeguard is **Bofur Keenaxe**; an unusually pragmatic and worldly dwarf, capable of cutting deals with enemies and playing one foe against another. This attitude doesn't sit well with many of the other dwarves in the castle, who see Bofur's dirty tricks and bargains as signs of a tarnished soul.

THE SERPENT CATACOMBS

The serpent catacombs are a maze of snaky tunnels that look like a deranged artist with a really alarming snake fetish carved the walls. The carvings go on for endless, endless miles—a frozen orgy of entangled snakes and serpents—some small, some large, some entirely serpentine, others with humanoid faces and hands. All of them, frozen in an instant; now, solid stone.

In some forgotten age before the coming of the Wizard King, the Serpent Rulers ruled the surface. These catacombs may be all that remains of their last city, petrified and sunk by that primordial battle's dreadful spells—or maybe the serpent folk built this last refuge, freezing themselves in spells of suspended animation and hiding deep underground.

You could ask them. Just bring the Mechanical Sun into this twisting intestinal labyrinth and wait. You may have to give it a few weeks, but the sun's magical radiance will turn the gnarled, entangled serpentine statues back into flesh.

The Serpent Rulers may have had some other way they planned to reanimate their kingdom; but, if so, it's been lost. Now, they rely on the Mechanical Sun to bring back their armies and minions. For a proper reanimation, a stone serpent needs to bask in the sun for days or weeks (or months, in the case of the really titanic serpent monsters that slumber down here, some of which are in the same weight class as a Koru behemoth). If a stone snake reanimates too hastily, what emerges from suspended animation is a mostly mindless, rampaging monster; not a scion of an ancient civilization far more sophisticated and intelligent than the hairy apes who now rule the surface.

At the heart of the serpent catacombs stands **Sthaa**, a city of correctly reanimated serpent folk that plot to seize control of the Mechanical Sun and resurrect their entire civilization. Their previous attempts to hold the sun failed; so, they now turn their cold, reptilian minds toward schemes of deceit and blackmail. They intend to infiltrate the rival kingdoms and use them to control the waystones. Infiltrating the Magocracy is easy—in truth, they can probably just send their best wizards there to say, *"greetingsss, we are wizardsss from before the dawn of time, can we take over your civilissation for our own nefarious endsss?"* and they have a good chance of success. However, the Reclamation Guild and the Queendom of Voth are proving to be much tougher challenges.

Serpents in Shards

For another recent take on ancient slithering overlords, see *Shards of the Broken Sky*, pages 162-172. The soldiers and archons in that book would make useful sun-thawed inhabitants of these catacombs.

SEA OF CLAWS

The ocean of the underworld. No, seriously.

Electrical discharges and dwarf-wrought lamps provide illumination over some stretches of this dark ocean. In other areas, the cavern roof is lower than the sea's surface, which makes sailing the Sea of Claws a challenging proposal. It is possible—if you know the route, or have access to up-to-date charts—but take the wrong torrent that pours through a lightless, rocky chasm and cave mermaids will be feasting on your eyeballs within minutes.

While the caves down here are large enough to generate some natural air circulation, the sea is often nearly windless. There are no waves and no trade winds—only the tides and movements of titanic creatures stir the water. Ships that wish to cross the Sea of Claws need rowers or some other means of propulsion to do so. The dark elves use ships with enchanted spider-silk sails; a whisper of breath is like a gust of wind to them. The Vothi use oars and poles, and the Magocrats typically use elementals or charmed sea-serpents. The dwarves, when they ruled here, forged mechanical fish of brass and iron that swam beneath the waters—and only sometimes got eaten by sea-monsters. (It's 13^{th} *Age*—of course, it's full of monsters.)

Three merfolk kingdoms once existed beneath the Sea of Claws, but only one endures in the present. The north kingdom fell victim to the same poison attack that destroyed Underhome, and the east kingdom got wiped out by sea-wraiths and is now a land of undead. Only the west kingdom survived, and they worship the Dark Gods and sacrifice abducted sailors on coral altars. Creepy.

BIG SEAS

Underground seas are a staple of F20 underground realms. Even so, we've noticed that some players who have no problem accepting all types of strange supernatural geography balk when confronted by entire underworld oceans. If that player is you, feel free to scale down the size from ocean to giant lake. Maybe the Sea of Claws just seems like an ocean because its tides ebb and flow through the Hollow Realm's caverns and tunnels?

throne under the mountain

Many roads cross at the Throne under the mountain. The Throne stands alone and exposed atop a pillar of stone in a huge cavern. It's surrounded by the monster-infested ruins of the dwarven city, Undercourt, which was abandoned when the dwarves fled the deep underworld. Most people assume, therefore, that the Throne once belonged to the Dwarf King.

It turns out, most people are wrong. The Throne under the mountain is older than the Dwarf King—older than Underhome, even. Some elder civilization may have created it, but it's more likely to be of divine provenance. Ancient chains of unknown metal suggest that whomever once sat on the Throne was *bound* there. Early myths of the serpent folk suggest the world was founded on the suffering of a god (or an icon) and when they were unbound, chaos and upheaval followed. Maybe that's why the ages seem to be passing by faster and faster—without a deity as the fixed point to bear the weight of time, the world is slipping into anarchy.

Potent magics surround the Throne, and unworthy claimants who sit on it get disintegrated. That hasn't stopped various wizards, warlords, and even a few unwise icons from trying to claim the Throne under the mountain. Some believed they could sacrifice themselves and take on the Throne's burden to set the world right; others hoped they'd be able to direct the flow of time or stop the changing ages. They all ended up as dust.

Dwarf legends insist the Dwarf King successfully claimed the Throne, but when you hear a dwarf legend that isn't backed up by lots and lots of dwarven wall art, you should be suspicious.

İ Sit on the Throne...

13th Age works hard to empower PCs, but there are limits. There's no reason to believe a PC could survive what previous icons could not, unless your campaign's grand finale has worked up to 10th-level reasons to believe! If this is not how you're choosing to create a new icon at the end of an age/ campaign, and one of the PCs is the type who always tries to pull swords out of stones, warn them that this isn't a consequence-free zone and they may soon have the chance to create a new character.

Vndercourt

The dwarves appear to have fled Undercourt during the war. The inner ring of the city—the part closest to the Throne—is home to potent magical guardians (including eidolons and sphinxes), drawn there to protect the relic. The center ring of the city is effectively a big, open-plan dungeon; expect congealed arcane vein deposits, mutant monsters, dwarven deathtraps (Undercourt was big on deathtraps even before the war with the dark elves), and rival looters. The outermost ring has been mostly(ish) cleared, and is now . . . well, a *functional* city is an exaggeration, but a *somewhat safe trading post/underworld crossroads/tourist deathtrap* fits. The empty Throne is the spiritual center of the underworld, so there are many roads that meet here.

Undercourt doesn't have rulers, per se, but here is a list of the major players here:

- Three-Corner Blue: An ettercap trader, Three-Corner Blue runs the Undercourt markets. She's an older ettercap; she jokes that she'll be eaten from the inside by her hatchlings shortly, so you'd better make a deal quick! Three-Corner Blue tries to dissuade adventurers from exploring Undercourt—she's got a profitable trading post here, and doesn't want anyone waking up an angry eidolon or other danger. The ettercap has, when she felt it necessary, even supplied troublesome adventurers with fake healing potions to eliminate them quietly.
- Urmali of the Unspeakable Truth: Urmali's a generous, kindly soul. She's friendly, caring, and quick to offer aid. Oh, and she's a devoted servant of the Dark Gods. Her temple believes the god who once sat on the Throne can be resurrected, so she aids adventurers to ensure any secrets they discover in Undercourt are known to the temple.
- Vog the Nailer: A brutal half-orc, Vog enforces the triumvirate's commands. He enjoys nailing things to other things. He also dabbles in carpentry—an expensive hobby, given how few trees there are underground.

tomb of the ten thousand

Technically, it's ten thousand and one, at least, and probably a lot more. Oh, and it's not a tomb.

Long ago, an Archmage—mighty in magic, but lacking in wisdom—embarked on a grand and glorious project. She intended to rescue the Great Gold Wyrm from the Abyss by binding all the demons in a single magic circle of surpassing power. Unfortunately, her spell went awry, creating a psychic connection between herself and the demons. A lord of hell transmuted itself into an emanation of pure evil thought and raced up this psychic connection, laughing at the thought of possessing the Archmage.

However, 9,999 or so other demons had the same idea. In the split-second after she cast the spell, the Archmage was possessed by a whole legion of abyssal horrors. She retained her sanity just long enough to cast a powerful *encystment* spell on herself, trapping her body in crystal and sinking her into the underworld. The cyst also consumed the various arcane devices and binding circle she'd made, as well as lots of unfortunate acolytes and apprentices who had assisted in her ritual, not to mention a large number of unlucky bystanders. Some of the demons tried to

escape—they leapt from the Archmage's contested soul to possess nearby apprentices or bystanders or attempted to manifest in the physical world; however, the *encystment* spell caught them, too, trapping them in lesser cyst-chambers. The whole troop— Archmage, demonic legions, acolytes, etc.—plummeted into the underworld.

The Emperor of that age sent expeditions into the depths to rescue the trapped Archmage; they excavated the area around the cyst, but dared not break into the inner chamber for fear they'd release all those demons. They also encountered demon cultists who were trying to break into the inner chamber for exactly that reason, so they set traps and monsters around the cyst to prevent tampering. Over the ages, the tomb has grown into a sprawling dungeon complex centered around the Archmage's prison. The outer portion of the dungeon is a warren of traps, monsters, and wards—the usual dungeon trappings. The inner section—the part within the cyst itself—is supposedly a one-way trip.

13 Reasons to Go to the Tomb of the Ten Thousand

Why in the name of the Crusader's Dark Gods would adventurers break into a dungeon filled with ten thousand demons?

- 1. The current Archmage needs to know a secret that only his predecessor knew. And when all those demons possessed that predecessor . . . well, it's unclear which demon snagged the secret he needs.
- 2. A previous Archmage, whose head is filled with the knowledge of the prior ages AND 10,000 demons? That is a unique treasure, indeed, and the Prince of Shadows wants you to steal it. That's right, he wants you to steal the Archmage's head. It as simple as pulling off the old one and replacing it with one made of stone. It weighs the same amount, so it should not cause a catastrophic collapse.
- 3. The Crusader just heard about this place and knows De'nekk'tor'sagga is trapped there. Who is De'nekk'tor'sagga? Just an archduke of the Abyss, one which other demons would follow. And the Crusader's mages just created this prototype control rune
- 4. The Emperor recently discovered an ancestor's portrait hidden away in a closet at the Imperial Palace. The picture looks strangely like him, but it shows him trapped in a cyst of crystal. Since he saw it, the Emperor has had strange dreams and is haunted by visions of the Tomb.
- 5. The possessed acolytes' souls begin displacing the citizens of Axis. Time to head down to the tomb and see who or what is behind it.
- 6. A new demon cult arises in the Hollow Realm, and they will see the demonic legion freed!! With their newfound power, the cult will finally . . . yadda, yadda, yadda . . . demonic invasion . . . yadda, yadda . . . end of the world.
- 7. The Tomb is a breeding ground for living dungeons; and each time a new one rises, the wards around the inner chamber get weaker. Someone should pay someone to go investigate that.

- 8. A trusted ally of the group comes to them with terrible news! Their loved one signed up with another group, and they entered the Tomb! They have not yet reemerged. Did something horrible happen to them, or did they breach the inner section? Wait. That's still something horrible happening to them
- 9. The Diabolist loves this place. She idly tests the cyst, trying to see if she can let just one demon out without collapsing the whole thing. She has a new plan, one which involves her allies within the party.
- 10. Little-known fact. That doomed Archmage? She was the Elf Queen's lover. Sometimes, the elven heart is prone to long for past loves. For the Elf Queen, that longing can stretch back for ages. Now, be dears and go get that Archmage for her.
- 11. Think of all those demons, just trapped in there, waiting for some horrible new demon cult to awaken them and send them forth The Great Gold Wyrm begins sending dreams to its agents to ensure that does not happen.
- 12. Normally, you wouldn't find the Lich King meddling in a vast, demon-filled tomb. However, the Lich King knows a thing or two about demon summoning. Who do you think first came up with the magical incantations? And who better to slip past the cyst than undead agents who won't trigger it? All he needs to get the legendary *Wand of the Wizard King* back from that meddling Archmage are some agents who are in his debt and are more or less willing to temporarily let go of that messy *life* business.
- 13. Actually, they're not demons anymore—they're devils now. Maybe they were devils all along; it's hard to say, really, unless someone decides to go in and get the whole story. They might even deserve to be set free

WEB CİTY

Like its two resident deities, this city has many names: Etternity . . . Gossam . . . The City of Whispering Temples . . . Spiderspire. An assortment of folk—mostly drow and ettercaps, but also plenty of humans, renegade dwarves, tieflings, gnomes, fungaloids, giant sentient spiders, and other, weirder things inhabit Web City and its surrounding territory. (Rule One of life in Web City: don't step on any spiders here—they might be intelligent. Rule Two: don't get stepped on by any spiders, some of them are giant).

Web City is really two cities that are built around two temples. The upper city grows from the roof of the great cavern. The buildings are carved from stalactites, dug into the cavern walls, or suspended by webs. The streets are rope bridges. The temple of He Who Weaves With Joy—part monastery, part library, and part bunker—is at the center of the upper city.

The shadow-girdled temple of She Who Spins in Darkness—a tangled maze of prisons, dungeons, nightmare galleries, torture chambers, and spider-breeding pits—is at the heart of the lower city. A warren of tenements, drow clan fortresses, illicit markets, bizarre factories, and cut-throat alleyways spread out from that central temple. The buildings are a mix of carved stalagmites, conjurations, and conventional constructions—all draped in webbing.

Some spires in the lower city are tall enough to reach the upper city, if you want to trudge thousands of steps up a narrow spiral staircase; aerial gondolas suspended on spider-silk cables and winged beetle-couriers provide faster ways up for those with coin to spend.

Web City is a theocracy controlled by the two temples; everything else is negotiable. Gangs and warlords control certain districts; others are under the relatively stable rule of trade guilds or drow families. If the currency of Voth is light, the currency of Web City is secrets—there some items you cannot purchase for any amount of gold or jewels, but you can obtain them with a secret of sufficient value. Even mundane transactions customarily involve the exchange of a secret; although, in this case, the secret can be minor or even widely known, and is usually just an excuse for gossip.

Embodied Gods?

The gods in 13th Age are remote and cryptic—they rarely meddle directly in the affairs of lowly mortals. The icons take the place of active, interventionist powers in this setting—they're the ones who pop up with prophecies, ordainments, and *deus ex machina* plot twists. She Who Spins and He Who Weaves are exceptions—they're much more active. They might be physically present in the mortal world, or may manifest when they desire, or just interact regularly with their priests. In any case, these gods act more like icons—characters can have icon relationships with them or possibly have *uniques* linked to them, too. (One Unique Thing: I'm a spider demigod).

The Cult of She Who Spins In Darkness

She Who Spins in Darkness delights in secrets. Her acolytes bring her secrets as offerings, and whisper them to her silkdraped altars in her dark temples. All secrets—from the most obscure and trivial to cosmic truth—have their value, and She will take them all.

Almost all ettercaps serve her, openly or in secret, but She has many worshippers among other peoples, too. (Many ettercaps also work for He Who Weaves With Joy, but even these enlightened ettercaps know to come home to mother when darkness falls.) After all, it's no secret that when She is allknowing, She will rise up and conquer the world, and everyone wants to be on the winning side. Some believe her triumph will be one of destruction, in which She destroys all her enemies, but most texts suggest her victory will be a more subtle one—She will enmesh all her foes in webs of deceit and blackmail, and control the world from behind the scenes by pulling all the strings. All will be her puppets—or her meat.

Her cult trades in secrets and forbidden lore. Gold and magic can buy access to a secret, but such tribute is never enough those who bargain with the cult must offer their own secrets, too, as part of the deal. Many balk at first, but they still come. Ambitious wizards seek out She Who Spins in Darkness to obtain secret spells. Adventurers come to her, looking for ways to defeat their enemies or complete a world-saving quest. Emperors and courtiers come to her, looking for information about their rivals.



Her temples are deathly silent, so she doesn't miss a whispered truth. The cult is closely allied with the drow (especially through Drowfort, page 52); and the Prince of Shadows may be another of the goddess' aspects (or her lover, or her child—their relationship is, unsurprisingly, a secret . . . and not one you can buy).

The Cult of He Who Weaves With Joy

He Who Weaves With Joy's ethos is the preservation and reconstruction of knowledge. His priests and agents look for lore that might otherwise be lost—they show up to salvage what they can when cities are sacked, libraries are burned, and other disasters occur. They're most active at the end of an age, and can be harbingers of doom, as they show up when the bad stuff's about to go down. Of course, they also show up as enlightened teachers and secret masters who disseminate lost knowledge of the past to deserving heirs. So, if an agent of He Who Weaves arrives in your town, it's time to consider your place in history do you think you're closer to the beginning of an age, or near its end?

Salvaged books and relics are kept in Web City's archives until the time comes for them to be returned. He Who Weaves does not always return what he preserves to its original ownerseven if those owners or their descendants are still alive. After all, he's a weaver—he shuttles threads of fate in and out of the tapestry of history. Sometimes, this is an astounding blessing such as, when a village faces starvation in the bleakest winter, and enlightened teachers appear bearing lost Druidic weather-control scrolls from the previous age. However, gods work in mysterious ways, so his monks also sometimes hand out necromantic tomes to would-be evil overlords or share tactical secrets of past empires with the Orc Lord. He Who Weaves has earned the Dwarf King's undying enmity for salvaging dwarven secrets and treasures from Underhome and distributing them others.

The temples of He Who Weaves are never silent—prayer gongs ring in the meditative gardens as regularly as clockwork, reminding the monks that time never stops turning, their work is never-ending, and they should find joy in knowing that entropy is ceaseless, but there's always something they can save.

Sights in Web City

Most surface dwellers spend their first few hours trying to figure out how to navigate all the spiderwebs, getting lost trying find their way to the upper city, or getting rolled in an alleyway by a torture gang (*"spill your secrets or we spill your guts"*). Web City is weird, even by the standards of the underworld. Once visitors get their bearings, though, they might visit some of these notable businesses:


Merglint's Surface Tours

(LOWER CITY) Merglint—who's either a gnome that got partially turned into a spider, or a really gnomish spider—possesses a rare teleportation circle that can blip visitors up to

the surface. While he advertises this service as *surface tours*, most of his clients are adventurers and pilgrims from the Dragon Empire looking for a quick shortcut home.

Cost: 500gp per traveler, plus a secret.

The Fine Print: there's always a chance you'll get snapped back to the underworld after a few hours on the surface—hence *tours*—and while you'll probably reappear in Merglint's, you might not. Merglint makes no guarantees about safe arrivals or side effects, up to and including being fused with fellow travelers and/or small spiders that happen to tag along. The Wizard King created the teleportation circle, and it does sometimes get redirected to the Necropolis or Omen.



The House of Plenty (Upper City)

This bizarre restaurant is the result of a magical ritual gone awry. Long ago, when He Who Weaves first manifested here, one of the god's teamhed to solve the problem of supplying food

first acolytes attempted to solve the problem of supplying food to an underground city. The acolyte succeeded in turning a room into a cornucopia, where the most delightful food appears out of thin air in response to the desires of those who enter the room. Unfortunately, the spell worked too well—anyone who entered the House of Plenty gorged themselves until they burst, unable to resist the bounty of delicious treats and unable to tear themselves away from the never-ending meal. Enterprising ettercaps have turned this deathtrap into a high-end restaurant—diners enter with a rope of spider-silk tied around their waists; after a prearranged amount of time, the ettercaps use the cord to drag the diner out. The maître d' of the House of Plenty is a forgeborn called **Gallant**; he is pathologically honest and open by nature, so the only way he could survive in this city of secrets was to find a job that didn't require him to conceal or confess anything.



Silverhand's Domain (Lower City)

The criminal boss, **Silverhand**, controls much of the lower city. She's a human from Voth—at least, she was. Silverhand has an irrational fear

of falling under the influence of She Who Spins; so, whenever she has to give away a personal secret, Silverhand implants a magic item in her body. She believes the item's quirk will override whatever leverage the secret might give the goddess. For example, when Silverhand was forced to tell the ettercaps where she mastered the art of swordfighting, she cut off her hand and replaced it with a dwarf-forged prosthesis. When she confessed her true love, she cut out her heart and replaced it with a relic of volcanic glass made by the Diabolist.



THE BOOT (UPPER CITY)

The Boot runs much of the upper city. They're a criminal consortium, known for their extreme violence (the Boot squishes spiders) and hermetic secrecy. None of the gang's street toughs know

the true identities of the Boot's leaders, so no one can trade that secret to She Who Spins. The Boot has an arrangement with the temple of He Who Weaves to keep thieves and cut-throats out of the upper city; adventurers who break the peace of the monastery get booted.



The İllusions of Mistress Masque (Upper City)

Mistress Masque's boutique specializes in longlasting, personally tailored illusions that use her particular flavor of *disguise self* spells. Her

technique involves using the appearances of others—she needs a token, a scrape of flesh, or a personal item from the subject to conjure their appearance. For example, if you want to look like a wood elf, Mistress Masque digs through her archives to find a lock of an elf's hair she purchased centuries ago, and uses that to make you look like the wood elf. She regularly purchases fresh supplies, so adventurers in need can make some quick coin by selling their bodies, or the illusion of their bodies, anyway.

Most of her clients are ettercaps, who use her illusions to obtain secrets and/or commit petty larceny; but she also gives a bulk discount to the temple of He Who Weaves, as they often need to deploy clandestine monks.

Mistress Masque usually presents as a human, but she's many centuries old, so . . . she's probably not. Knowing this city, she's probably something that has too many eyes.



The Prince's Spire (Lower City)

The Prince's Spire is a spike of black basalt. It has no doors or windows, just the Prince of Shadows' sigil carved into its side. Theories about the

cryptic structure abound—it's a secret connection between Shadowport and Web City, it's a listening post that steals secrets from the temple of She Who Spins, it's a giant magical dagger plunged into the heart of the city, it's a warehouse for stolen goods, or it's the Prince's ultimate bolt-hole in case things ever go really wrong.



Professional Intercession Services (Upper City)

Renegade monks from the temple of He Who Weaves founded this eccentric company; they've learned to read the vibrations in the

web when their former god becomes excited about something. In effect, these monks get divine, advance warning of upcoming catastrophes; and they dispatch messengers bearing contracts to the doomed places: *sign here, and we'll follow up with a crack team of heroic, doom-thwarting adventurers.*

There's one small catch: the PIS is *technically* blaspheming against He Who Weaves With Joy's whole philosophy (He can't weave without thread, and his thread is spun from catastrophe); so, anyone who works for the PIS risks incurring divine wrath.



THE ETTERPIT

Some cities have sewers; Web City has the Etterpit. Most of the lower city's streets are paved with thickly matted webbing so dense, it's hard as stone; but the cave extends below this

cobweb layer. The dark places below are called the Etterpit and they're . . . look, if you have a spider phobia, stop reading now. If you're *not* phobic about spiders, then imagine you are. Imagine the sight of those hairy legs fills you with complete heart-stopping terror, panic, and revulsion.

The Etterpit is a thousand times worse. There are billions of crawling spiders, half-human spider-things, and cocooned corpses bursting open with trillions of pale little hatchlings; it's a carpet of seething, hairy darkness.

Oh, and if you want to sneak into the temple of She Who Spins in Darkness, this is the only secret way in



Ony* and Alabaster Shrines

Across the wider world, ettercap temples contain holy altars to She Who Spins in Darkness—they bring their pilfered secrets and whisper them to those altars. Here in Web City, though, no one has

time for that. Courtesy public altars, in the form of stone spider shrines, stand on every street corner. Want to make a donation of secrets? Just walk up and whisper your offering into the shrine. The shrines in the shadowy lower city are carved from purest alabaster; the upper city shrines are onyx, to stand out against the holy light. Oh, you should also be aware that sometimes, lines get crossed, and a secret that was supposed to go straight to She Who Spins comes out of another shrine instead, to be picked up by anyone who happens to be eavesdropping.

And in Web City, someone's always listening

Seven Obvious Truths of Web City

We originally titled this section *13 Secrets of Web City*, but come on—secrets are worth cash money here! So, here are seven truths everyone in Web City knows:

- 1. Information Wants To Be Free: Web City has the vibe of an 80s Cyberpunk setting—you've got two rival megacorps, lots of gangs and operators, all sorts of weird, spider-themed augmentation and narcotics, and a fantasy noir feel. It's always night in the underworld, chummer.
- 2. They Who Cooperate In The Shadows: While She Who Spins and He Who Weaves pursue different divine goals, they still work together. The two deities have a lot of shared enemies—and possibly one shared ally. There's a third spider-god out there—call it Atropos, call it She Who Cuts—one spins the thread, one weaves it, and this one cuts it short. There's a third temple hidden somewhere in Web City, and a third order.
- 3. No Law, Only Gods: There's no government in Web City, and no lords. The two temples are just the two largest gangs; the city's built on a web of personal relationships, obligations, debts, and contracts. You can get away with anything if you've got enough pull.

- 4. Drowfort Defense System: One of Drowfort's purposes is to protect Web City. Whenever a rival power threatens to attack the anarchic Web City, Drowfort dispatches troops to block the tunnels and thwart the attack. Without Drowfort's protection, Web City would quickly be destroyed or conquered.
- 5. Oh Yeah, Phase Spiders: Phase spiders regularly materialize in Web City. They definitely assist the monks of He Who Weaves, teleporting them to places where they need to intervene; but that's not their only business in this town. More alarmingly, much of the webbing that covers the buildings in Web City is phase spider webbing, and it's alive and/or magical in ways that no one understands. (Anyone who tries to meddle with the webs vanishes, and there are no prizes for guessing what happened to them.)
- 6. Pulling the Strings: Web City is full of spies and conspirators; it's a cosmopolitan crossroads for powers from the underworld and the Dragon Empire (and the overworld, for that matter). All the icons have agents here, looking for secrets that might give them leverage over their rivals. News comes through Web City faster than any other route.
- 7. The Web Finds Its Own Uses For Things: Everyone and everything is connected. Everyone's playing the game, and if you come to Web City, you'll be drawn into the spiders' schemes. The one worthless secret in this town is, "I'm not what I seem."

ETTERCAPS

You'll find many adventurer-tier ettercaps in the *13th Age Bestiary*. The champion-tier ettercaps below are the sort of spidery chaps adventurers might run into in Web City. Of course, you can also level-up the lower-level ettercaps.

All (well, *almost* all) ettercaps are devotees of either She Who Spins in Darkness or He Who Weaves With Joy, and they get special bonus abilities, depending on which god/icon/divine aspect/big spider thing they serve.

Nastier Specials

- The web weaves: Devotees of She Who Spins in Darkness or He Who Weaves With Joy can call upon their god to aid them in combat. The first time an enemy rolls a specific value on their natural attack roll (see below), add four temple guard mooks to the battle on their initiative count (if temple guards are part of the battle) or immediately after the triggering target's turn. She Who Spins in Darkness: Triggering value is 1 or 2 on the
 - attack roll. She capitalizes on disasters as they brew.
 - *He Who Weaves With Joy:* Triggering value is 19 or 20 on the attack roll. He capitalizes on the triumphs of others.



Ettercap Monk

The fighting techniques of ettercap monks include water spider dance and weave the web of steel. The secret of the ninth kick is known only to the masters of the monastery.

6th level spoiler [нималоіd] Initiative: +14

Water spider dance +12 vs. AC—16 damage, and if the target is dazed, stuck, or hampered the ettercap monk either pops free and may make move and make a free *the ninth kick* attack on a different target, OR may make a *poison bite* attack as a free action.

Natural even miss: 6 damage

The ninth kick +12 vs. AC-14 damage

Natural 16+: The monk may make a *poison bite* attack as a free action.

[special trigger] **Poison bite +12 vs. PD**-5 damage, and the target is dazed and takes 5 ongoing poison damage (save ends both).

C: Web spray +12 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group)—12 damage Natural even hit: The target is hampered Natural odd hit: The target is stuck

Limited use: 1/battle

- *Meditate:* The monk may spend its standard action meditating; if it does so, it regains one use of its *web spray* attack.
- *Goopy webs:* When an enemy of level 7 or lower rolls a natural 1-5 with a melee attack against an ettercap monk, that enemy is dazed.

C 23	
D 18	HP 81
4D 18	

Ettercap Warrior

A P N

The priestly shuffling and barbaric rage got beaten out of this one. What's left is chitin, poison, and will.

8th level blocker [HUMANOID] Initiative: +14

Thrusting spear +13 vs. AC—34 damage Natural 16+: The ettercap warrior can make a poison bite attack as a free action. Natural even miss: 8 damage.

Poison bite +13 vs. AC-10 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

Miss: If the target is dazed, hampered, or stuck, it takes 8 damage.

Weave the web of steel +12 vs. PD (each engaged enemy)—27 damage

Natural even hit: The target is hampered.

Natural odd hit: The target is stuck.

Limited use: Only when the escalation die is odd.

Goopy webs: When an enemy of level 6 or lower rolls a natural 1–5 with a melee attack against an ettercap warrior, that enemy is dazed.

AC	24	
PD	22	HP 140
MD	21	

Ettercap Temple Gvard

When an ettercap grows old; when its chitinous shell grows thin and brittle; and when its ear-hairs grow too stiff to pick up subtle whispers; it retires to the temples and falls into vigilant slumber clinging to the walls and ceiling and burying itself beneath thick cobwebs. There, it can rest for centuries, until it is called upon to defend the altars of its brood.

8th level mook [нималоіd] Initiative: +16

Sacrificial spike +13 vs. AC-25 damage

Fanatical Devotion: As a standard action, an ettercap temple guard can deal 36 damage to itself to deal 3d20 poison damage to one dazed, hampered, or stuck enemy engaged with it.

Nastier Specials

I had goopy webs when I was younger: The first enemy that rolls a natural 1-5 with an attack against a member of the ettercap temple guard mob is dazed.

AC 23	
PD 20	HP 36 (mook)
MD 20	

Mook: Kill one ettercap temple guard for every 36 damage you deal to the mob.

Ettercap Hieromonk

The high priests and hieromonks rarely leave the temple precincts, where they while away the endless dark chittering to one another in a secret language of prophecies and portents. They only leave the temple when events of cosmic importance are at hand—or when there's a cosmic need to kick an adventurer in the face.

Double-strength 9th level caster [HUMANOID] Initiative: +20

Staff and fangs +15 vs. AC-80 damage Miss: 40 damage

Stick of truth +14 vs. PD-120 damage, and the target is weakened

Limited use: Only against foes whose secrets are known to the hieromonk.

C: Web of truth + 14 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)—75 psychic damage, and the target becomes helpless and stuck (hard save, 16+ ends both). The target may automatically succeed in this save if they reveal a secret they would prefer to keep hidden from their allies (and the hieromonk!). This secret must be intensely personal, important, or damning in order to break the curse.

Limited use: 1/battle

Meditate: The hieromonk may spend its standard action meditating; if it does so, it regains one use of its *web of truth* attack. Alternatively, it can restore the 1/battle abilities of up to 1d4 nearby lower-level ettercap allies.

AC	26	
PD	24	HP 333
MD	24	

CHAPTER 5:

THE DEEPS

What's at the bottom of the world? What's beyond the below?

It's possible the underworld's deepest regions are a lot like the Hollow Realm, they're just overrun by creatures knocked offkilter by the poison that drove the dwarves to the surface. After all, the Deeps were part of Underhome, too. This is how the original designers of 13th Age tend to view it, anyway. Jonathan and Rob didn't expect to treat the underworld of the Dragon Empire like the Underworld of Glorantha—a literal Other-World that requires ritual or transformation to cross over. Rather, they see the overworld as the realm that's supernatural-and-beyond.

MEAПWHİLE, İП THİS BOOK...

Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, the author of *Book of the Underworld*, thinks of the deepest parts of the underworld as seriously perilous and alien. He feels that the Deeps are not somewhere you wander into looking for loot and adventure they're where you go on a desperate quest to save the world.

Perhaps the magic that destroyed Underhome had a greater impact in the ages in-between. Or, perhaps the dwarves never truly understood the world beneath their feet, and now the paths once blocked by solid dwarven stone are open.

Below, you'll find five possible campaign-capping ultimatethreat-takes on what you might find *beneath* the underworld. We've included adventure and foreshadowing ideas for each of them, so you can seed that epic quest early on in your campaign. Several of these threats involve revelations about the nature of reality, which fits with Gareth's concept of the underworld's mystic nature—dig deep enough in his campaign, and you'll discover truths that you may wish remained unknown.

Obviously, ideas that work well for ending one campaign won't fit at all in another. You could draft a couple of these ideas as plot elements that weren't ultimate; but others are too strange to drop into a campaign without them *really* mattering.

We've stacked the ideas from those we consider potentially useful in any campaign to those that are wilder than we'd expect.

The Earthly Paradise

Oh, you've got to see what we've built in the Deeps! We've been working down there for so long . . . working so hard. No rest, no sleep. Just the great work. Compared to what we've made, Forge is a hovel; and all Underhome's just a hole in the dirt. No, we have made halls and mansions in the Deeps. We have cut jewels brighter than stars, raised statues taller than mountains. Look ye upon the gardens, where unicorns roam amid golden trees! Look ye upon the glittering lakes, the laughing waterfalls! Look ye upon the temples of our ancestors and the palace of our king!

What? You can't see it? You say I'm just showing you a filthy cave littered with gnawed bones? Imbecile! Deceiver! I'll cut you until you see the truth! I'll cut out your eyes so you see the beauty of our works!

-a derro speaks

THE UNDERKRAKENS

First introduced in *13 True Ways* (page 249), the underkrakens are a swarm of gargantuan creatures/living ships/alien cities that recently invaded the underworld. Since they're gigantic and entombed in the rock of the Deeps, the PCs are unlikely to ever get a look at the full extent of a majestic underkraken. Instead, they see only fragments—such as a serrated, spiky tentacle that rips through stone with a ferocious hunger and the singleminded intent of a machine. Other glimpses might include a section of hide, slick with multicolored ghost-slime and studded with extradimensional barnacles; an entry-sphincter, ringed with teeth; snorting blowholes that squirt out spore clouds; or weird, organic shapes that might be organs, might be eggs, or might be factories.

The arrival of the underkrakens was the beginning of a world-ending catastrophe. Their movements in the Deeps caused earthquakes and volcanic eruptions on the surface. They devoured everything they encountered, including a few drow observation posts. Their arrival caused arcane shockwaves, invisible tidal waves that shook the towers of Horizon and Santa Cora. If the krakens had kept rising, kept chewing their way up through the underworld . . . who knows what would have happened?



But they stopped—their advance grinding to a halt. The underkrakens fell silent, almost completely immobile—except for the occasional lazy sweep of a tentacle or lethal spasm of a defense reflex. Soon afterward, the first of the soul flensers (page 78) appeared, the first outbreak of a plague that now threatens the Empire.

Put baldly—soul flensers are the underkrakens' crew/ emanations/drones. Soul flensers flense people, stripping away portions of their souls. Then, they teleport back and dump their stolen soul-energy into their home kraken's psychic bioreactor. Rinse and repeat, until the krakens have recharged enough to ... well, maybe they'll just leave? Maybe the gigantic eldritch tentacle-monsters from another dimension will just gas up and go home. Or maybe the krakens will start to rise again.

Defeating the underkrakens is definitely an epic-tier quest, but it's going to be a tricky one. There's a whole *fleet* of giant, alien spaceship-monsters down here. A band of adventurers might be able to kill a single underkraken—probably by getting inside the beast and hitting some vital organ—but killing one won't stop the rest. They'll need a better plan, whether it's taking over an underkraken and going subterranean bio-horror pirates; hijacking an underkraken, piloting it back to Horizon, and dissecting the monster to find a counter-weapon; or even negotiating a peace treaty with the aliens who want to boil their souls down for fuel.

İncorporating Vnderkraken in Your Vnderworld Adventure

- One option is to make the underkraken invasion repercussions the champion-level problem, and the underkrakens the epic-level threat. So, the derro (or the drow, or some other underworld bad guys) attack the surface, the PCs thwart them, and then they discover the derro were fleeing *something worse*.
- Play into the alien invasion tropes with soul flensers. Have them abduct souls from isolated villages in the fantasy equivalent of New Mexico. Maybe they're in league with the black-clad minions of one of the icons. Maybe one of the underkrakens crashed at the Well of the Rose, and was taken to the 51st vault under Horizon. Dragon mutilations, anyone?
- Mechanically, soul flensers flense powers and spells. However, they also take bits of the victim's mind and memories. What happens to those stolen personality fragments? If everyone in the group gets flensed, you could run a one-shot where they play weird, bio-magical clones of the PCs as their flensed fragments break free of the underkrakens and create

temporary bodies for themselves out of mutable alien flesh. What would the player characters do if they knew they only had a few days to live?

Underkraken Minions

They come out of the darkness, whirling across the ground without touching it. Things not of this world; things of congealed alien hunger and psychic force, glowing dimly with weird radiation. They see you not as a foe, not even as a victim, but as a conglomeration of parts to be stripped, sifted, cleansed and processed. Your soul is their meat.

The underkrakens dispatch their weird soul flensers to strip psychic energy from victims. They use their *soul flensing tentacles* to strip fragments from a soul before fleeing.

If a PC's spell, power connected to a talent, or some other limited power gets flensed away, they lose the ability to use the specific power or spell that was taken (or a single use of that power, if it has a certain number of uses per day or battle). The PC also loses the spell or power slot that the element they lost occupied. For example, if your 7th level *fireball* gets flensed away, you lose the ability to cast *fireball* **and** you lose that spell slot; you don't just get to choose a different spell to replace it.

The power that gets flensed could be one the PC has already used, or one they have not yet expended during this battle or on this day; it's random. Don't worry about being precisely fair or random—one option is to roll a d6:

- 1. The player chooses a power they don't mind losing (i.e. one they've already used, or a really low-level one)
- 2. The player chooses a power that really hurts to lose
- 3. The GM chooses the power
- 4. The player to the target's left chooses the power
- 5. The player to the target's right chooses the power
- 6. The soul flenser takes d6 points from a background or 1 point from an icon relationship, instead

Soul Flenser

Surviving a flensing seems like a lucky break, at first. Then, the nightmares start. Always the same. Part of your soul is being swallowed by a great tentacled being, deep below the world. It thinks you're tasty. The tentacle reaches up . . . and you wake, screaming.

9th level spoiler [ABERRATION] Initiative: +15

Soul flensing tentacles +14 vs. PD-30 damage

Natural even hit, or any hit against a weakened, stunned, or confused target: Randomly select one of the target's limiteduse powers or spells. The soul flenser flenses it away, removing it from the target until that creature regains it via a Connection to the Oversoul success (see below).

Natural 3, 6, or 9: The target is confused.

- **C: Soul blast + 14 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group)**—35 psychic damage
 - Natural even hit: The target is weakened.
 - *Natural odd hit:* If the target is already weakened, it's also stunned until end of its next turn.

Natural 3, 6, or 9: The target is confused.

- *Connection to the Oversoul:* When a creature slays a soul flenser, it can roll a hard save (16+). If it succeeds, the creature regains one power it has had flensed away.
- *Intellect fortress:* When an enemy misses the soul flenser with an attack against MD, that attacker takes half the miss damage, if any.
- *Underkraken teleport:* A soul flenser that has successfully flensed at least once can (and usually will, provided some of its enemies are confused, weakened, or stunned) use a standard action to prepare itself to teleport. Once it does this, during its next turn it can use a move action to teleport back to its home underkraken, no matter how distant, leaving the battle behind. Soul flensers fighting beside or within their underkraken can't use this ability; they're already home.

Nastier Specials

- *Flensing escalator:* The soul flenser gains an attack bonus equal to the escalation die against creatures that have had one or more powers flensed away.
- *Oversoul control:* When confused by a soul flenser's effect, a creature that has had a power flensed away can use and re-use that limited power against their erstwhile allies, if the GM sees how to use the power in a useful way.

AC	25	
PD	21	HP 180
MD	23	

Flensemaster

It's only in the moment before it finally eats your soul that you remember you've seen this monster before. It was in your room when you had all those nightmares; it was in the chapel at the funeral; it watched you, fed from you, whenever you suffered. Now, it's here to swallow the dregs of your ruined, tattered soul.

10th level spoiler [ABERRATION] Initiative: +17

Paralytic tendrils +15 vs. PD (two attacks)—30 damage, and if the target was flensed in this battle, the target cannot remember the details of the encounter afterward.

Natural even hit: The target is weakened.

Natural odd hit: If the target is already weakened, it's also stuck until the end of its next turn.

C: Soul vortex +15 vs. MD (all nearby enemies)—40 psychic damage

Natural even hit: The target is weakened.

Natural odd hit: If the target is already weakened, it's also stunned until end of its next turn. *Natural 3, 6, or 9:* The target is confused.

Limited Use: 1/battle

- **R: Disintegration ray +15 vs. PD (one nearby enemy, or one far away enemy at -2 to attack)**—60 damage, and if the target is already weakened, the target must start making last gasp saves. If the target fails four last gasp saves, the target crumbles to dust. Non-living targets like structures or objects get disintegrated automatically.
- *Recharge:* If a nearby soul flenser has successfully flensed away an ability, it can spend a standard action to give the flensemaster another use of *soul vortex*.
- *Connection to the Oversoul:* When a creature slays a flensemaster, it can roll a hard save (16+). If it succeeds, the creature regains one power it has had flensed away.
- Mothership teleport: If a nearby soul flenser has successfully flensed away at least one ability, the flensemaster can use a standard action to prepare itself to teleport. Once it does this, during its next turn it can use a move action to teleport back to its home underkraken, no matter how distant, leaving the battle behind. All nearby soul flensers can, if they wish, hitch a ride on the flensemaster.

Nastier Specials

- *Flensing escalator:* The flensemaster gets an attack bonus equal to the escalation die against creatures that have had at least one ability flensed away.
- *Cloaking field:* The flensemaster and all nearby soul flensers are *invisible* at the start of the battle. This invisibility is lost for all when any of the soul flensers attack.

AC	26	
PD	20	HP 220
MD	24	

THE FLERSED

This is what's left when you've stripped away everything that makes a person, monster, or hero uniquely themselves. It moves, it follows the soul flensers' orders, and it fights, but you can't really remember its shape, its features, or even whether it's attacking you with a club or a claw.

9th level mook [ABERRATION] Initiative: +12

Fists, claws, or shoddy weapons +13 vs. AC—20 damage, or 40 damage against a target that currently has one or more powers flensed away.

- *Connection to the Oversoul:* When a creature slays the Flensed, it can roll a hard save (16+). If it succeeds, the creature regains one power it has had flensed away.
- *Flensing escalator:* The Flensed gains an attack bonus equal to the escalation die against creatures that have had one or more powers flensed away.

AC	22	
PD	20	HP 60 (mook)
MD	22	

Mook: Kill one Flensed mook for every 60 damage you deal to the mob.

THE WEIRDING

There are two things everyone knows about the Archmage he does weird experiments, and he builds and maintains magic wards to protect the Empire; but protect it from what, exactly? Living dungeons? Hellholes? Hostile invasions? Age-ending cataclysms? By that measure, he's doing a rather poor job; all those horrors regularly engulf the Empire. One possible answer: he's keeping out something *worse*.

The overworld and underworld are two halves of a protective shell that shield the vulnerable surface realm from the seething, cosmic chaos outside. Reality was imposed on this cosmic madness with the use of magic. Maybe the Wizard King established the first ward, carving his empire out of the sea of chaos. Or perhaps the wards predate the Dragon Empire—made by the serpent people, some other precursor civilization, or the gods themselves—and maintaining the wards is the one responsibility that can never be neglected. It doesn't matter whether the Empire stands or falls—for reality to endure, the wards must be maintained.

At the lowest point of the underworld is a place called the Weirding, where the influence of the wards ends and ordered reality meets seething madness. Here at the shore of the sea of cosmic chaos, the underworld gives way to the unworld—the impossible place. (Perhaps hell and the additional planes of existence are other bubbles of reality, preserved by their own wards . . . and demons steal souls to power their own wards against the chaos.)

The sea of chaos is the source of arcane magic. When wizards cast spells, they open a little crack and let a tiny bit of carefully controlled chaos in to overwrite reality. Chanting a few words and wiggling your fingers shouldn't make a *fireball*—but, if you let chaos in, anything can happen. Let properly calibrated chaos in, and the anything that happens does 10d10 fire damage. (Sorcerers do this instinctively; chaos mages kick holes in the world with their big hobnailed boots just to see what squirts out). So, there's tension—or a secret war—between the Archmage and the other powerful wizards. If he reduces the strength of his wards, magic becomes more powerful.

What happens when a sufficiently powerful spellcaster decides to stop deferring to the Archmage and goes after the

wards? What happens when the desire for personal power threatens the literal foundations of reality?

- Give the PCs a friendly wizard patron early in the campaign—a wise old coot in an ivy-covered tower who sends them on quests and gives them magical backup. Then, have that wizard grow addicted to power, and push the PCs to break the Archmage's wards in the underworld—for good reasons, of course; he needs the added magic to deal with that pesky dragon, or that orc invasion, or that plague
- The Magocracy is the obvious big village for this campaign—a whole society of nutty, power-hungry spellcasters.

CATACOMBS OF THE GODS

Take flight, and rise into the sky. You'll soar past the clouds, past flying realms and errant stars, and you'll reach the overworld. Here, physics and base-matter laws blend into the realm of the Gods of Light. You can fly to their heavens.

Turn around, go down, and descend into the depths. Go past the temples of the Dark Gods, and keep going. Go deep enough, and the material realm blurs into spiritual, cosmic darkness. Down here, at the bottom of the world, is a realm of tombs built by no mortal hand. These are the tombs of the gods themselves, which came into existence at the same moment the universe was created. Each god—even ones then unborn and unknown—has a tomb appointed for them. And all these tombs wait at the bottom of the world.

Bizarre custodians guard these cyclopean tombs and entomb dead gods here with all the pomp and ceremony—and grave goods—appropriate to the passing of divine powers. The catacombs are all part of the cosmic order: gods form and perish, they get buried down here, and weird godly grave keepers do their thing. Matters only get unstable and dangerous when mortals get involved; such as when necromancers and evil icons try to dig up dead gods, grave-robbers look to steal artifacts from the tombs, and doomed pilgrims seek to pay homage to forbidden tombs.

What happens when the cosmic cycle of death gets thrown off track? What happens if there are more Dark Gods than Gods of Light?

- 13th Age puts less emphasis on having distinct, named gods than other F20 games, so it can be fun to have *lots* of gods—each one individually rather trivial. Maybe there are 169 Gods of Light balanced against 169 Dark Gods; at that scale, each god can have a quirky personality and portfolio without making the whole setting weird(er than it already is). If there's only one God of War, she's probably going to be an armored warrior with a big helmet and some anger management issues, or something close to that. If you've got room for two dozen war-related deities on either side, then you can have the patron god of Blockading Ports or the patron god of Small Warbands of Desperate Heroes Sent to Assassinate the Enemy General.
- If every god has their tomb built and appointed for them in advance, perhaps the secret to killing a god is engraved on their tomb. Necromancy, after all, strictly means *divining by means of the dead*



 One of the many rites of ascension (or rites for stopping an ascension) you'll find in the Dragon Empire requires a sympathetic element from a like deity (or one which goes against the nature of the ascending individual). Want to become the new God of Hope? You'll need a spark from the Goddess of Hope from the 3rd age. Epic adventurers may find themselves here to gather a last, crucial component to stop the ending of the age.

LAND BEYOND THE AGES

Go deep enough, and time itself breaks down. The remnants of past ages, preserved in Caverns of Lost Time (page 49) slowly sink through the earth until they collapse and flow together, merging and losing their identities as they blend with times that will be, might be, and never were or will be.

The Land Beyond the Ages is the backstage of reality, an impossibly huge cavern that stores the discarded and unused parts of history, waiting for the fates to pick them up and use them. It's a mad, chaotic space—the only order here is that imposed by the various historical icons who've ended up here. Each icon—and there are dozens down here—has a citadel or fortress, and the surrounding territory is shaped by that icon's will and personality. The land between seethes with the chaos of leftovers and might-have-beens. Day and night exist, but they happen randomly. There is gravity here—sometimes. Magic surges like a tide. The landscape is an unlikely patchwork of terrains, all stuck together at random, like a stack of unused stage backdrops. Dinosaurs roam the weirdness, fighting with robots.

Those who dwell in the Land Beyond the Ages are outside of time and cannot leave—if they set one foot on the surface, they'll crumble to dust instantly. They can—with much effort and at considerable cost—travel through the underworld; but the closer to the surface they go, the greater the risk of some temporal rupture destroying them. Instead, the various lost icons must work through agents and emissaries.

So, basically, the Land Beyond the Ages is a cross-temporal prison/storeroom/cosmic stew populated by former icons, lost worlds, and weird monsters. Unlike the other takes on the Deeps, the Land Beyond the Ages isn't a grand cosmic threat—it's a sign of things to come. The 13th age *will* end eventually, ushering in a 14th age. Visiting the Land Beyond the Ages can give the PCs clues about the world to come.

Which of the 13th age's icons will end up in this cosmic deep store? What might an icon do to escape this fate?

- There are all sorts of signs and portents in the years before the end of an age—and then, the catastrophes begin. Traveling to the Land Beyond the Ages could give the players clues about how much longer they have before the end of their world.
- Perhaps living dungeons are heralds of the next age—if the Dungeon of the Serpent Labyrinth reaches the surface world and takes root, the next age will be all snake-y. If it's the Dungeon of the Well of Fire, then it'll be all fiery. It's up to the adventurers to escort-quest the nicer living dungeons to the surface to shape the age to come.
- For that matter—what if, in the time between when one age ends and the next begins, icons can fight their way out of the Land Beyond and return to the surface world to reclaim their place? What happens if some of the worst icons of history try to come back? Is the adventurers' last quest to build a better world?

MASTER OF DVNGEONS

At the heart of the underworld dwells a being older than the gods. It appears as whatever humanoid will most surprise OR make sense to the PCs. Something like Gary Gygaz. Or a floating orb with several eyeballs . . . this appearance, however, is just a screen that hides its true form. It makes living dungeons in its workshop, assembling them from a collection of monsters and mazes. It gives each one some form of heart, then releases the new dungeons to swim up through the underworld in search of heroes.

That's right: in search of heroes. All living dungeons are designed to be defeated—that's why they all have an obvious weak point to be exploited. They're made as tests, to hone adventurers' skills. As their talents grow, the PCs will be challenged by increasing numbers of living dungeons—dungeons that seek them out and attack them, dungeons deliberately constructed to attack them where they are most vulnerable, and dungeons to counter their favorite tactics and force them to develop new stratagems.

In the end, the heroes find clues in the broken dungeons that lead them down into the Deeps, where they at last encounter this cryptic Master of Dungeons. It has a final challenge for them one final quest . . . the quest for which it's spent their entire lives preparing them. (If you want to be super-meta, this final quest is to go beyond the walls of reality to bring back the Tomes of Low, the books that define reality in the next edition, er . . . age.)

- Obviously, this campaign is all about the living dungeons, so we'll point you to *Eyes of the Stone Thief* for additional material. One alternate ending for a *Stone Thief* campaign: once they slay the dungeon, it swallows them and brings them to the Deeps for a meeting with the Master of Dungeons.
- Optionally, this campaign could dance with the idea that the PCs discover they're in a roleplaying game. Maybe they find magic items shaped like dice, or a magic mirror that lets them see events in the *real world*.
- To lend structure to the campaign, have the Emperor or another icon put the characters in charge of a rapid-reaction force of living dungeon-busters. Some adventures could revolve around evil schemes to use living dungeons, other Imperial duties, or recruiting more dungeon-fighters to the force.

BOOK OF THE UNDERWORLD

ΑΡΡΕΠΟΙΧ

TREASURES OF THE VΠDERWORLD

- Armor, Master-forged (Epic Armor): +3 to AC. Recharge 16+: Activate this ability when you are the last player character left in the battle and at least two of your allies have been knocked unconscious or killed. For the rest of the battle, you may heal using one recovery per round as a quick action. Quirk: Sings songs of ancient days.
- **Bell of Gathering Friends (Wondrous Item):** Characters may attune to this brass bell during a full heal-up. When the bell is rung, only individuals attuned to it can hear the sound. Echoes of the bell can be heard for some distance underground, giving scattered companions a +4 bonus to any tests that involve finding their way back to the rest of the party. *Quirk:* Delights in entertaining and taking care of companions.

Bezoar of the Caves (Wondrous Item):

Recharge 16+: Characters may attune to this misshapen lump of compacted magical items during a full heal-up. When the character calls upon the magic of the bezoar, they gain the benefits of two runes (13th Age core rulebook, page 284), as the magic from the items in the bezoar disperses into them. However, this requires the character to make a normal save to see whether they fall under the effects of the Calling (page 10). A character who uses this item may have to replace multiple relationship dice with Calling dice. *Quirk:* The character spasmodically talks to the sullen voices of the true magic items, which only they can hear.

- **Drow Poesy (Wondrous Item):** The drow make these magic items from flowers they pluck in hell, enchanted spider webs, and other rare components. The *poesy* must be held in one hand. It grants a +1 bonus to PD (adventurer); +2 (champion); +3 (epic); and a +2 bonus on saves against the Calling (page 10). *Quirk:* Pretentiously verbose.
- **Star-shard (One-Shot Item):** A star-shard glows with starlight, warding off both darkness and despair. Crushed, it can teleport a single individual to the Elf Queen's woods. However, the teleportation effect is at the Elf Queen's gift and discretion—she may refuse to allow entry, or choose the place and time of the traveler's arrival.
- **Web-slicing (Edged Weapons Only):** If stuck or hampered by a web or similar physical entanglement, gain a +5 bonus to saves. *Quirk:* Prefers direct solutions to complex problems.

пеw monster list

Level	Role	Name	Summary	Size	Page
3	troop	red dust commando	alchemically aided warrior	normal	39
3	troop	red dust marauder	somewhat generic warrior	normal	38
4	leader	red dust seer	poisoner and summoner	normal	39
4	mook	mawling	Gorogan-chewing rock parasite	weakling	34
4	wrecker	gorovore cultist	Gorogan-chewing mutant cultist	large	35
4	wrecker	hostile hollow	cave that eats you	huge	18
5	troop	brethren of the shattered crown	demon cultist with delusions of primacy	normal	34
6	archer	trog chucker	javelins from the darkness	weakling	58
6	blocker	mushroom warrior	pokey and sticky	normal	59
6	spoiler	ettercap monk	spinning kicks and gooey webs	normal	74
6	troop	drider secret taker	secret-stealing brute	large	54
6	troop	trog warrior	solid bruiser from a swampy place	normal	59
7	leader	death capo	poisoned commands and a sharp axe	normal	60

BOOK OF THE UNDERWORLD

Level	Role	Name	Summary	Size	Page
7	spoiler	lethian	memory-stealing underworld river elemental	large	35
7	troop	mushroom farmer	truth in naming	weakling	60
7	spoiler	venom-wracked drider	spreads the poison	large	54
8	blocker	ettercap warrior	weaves webs of steel in the traditional martial sense	normal	74
8	mook	ettercap temple guard	retired ettercap, woken for crisis situations	normal	75
8	spoiler	Night's Breath harpy	adapted to use echoes to its advantage	normal	50
8	troop	silver folk assassin	rogue-like fighter	normal	53
9	blocker	toothy cavern	colossal carnivorous cavern	huge	19
9	caster	drow sorcerer captain	spellcaster unafraid to mix it up in melee	normal	53
9	caster	ettercap hieromonk	uses your secrets in secret techniques	double- strength	75
9	spoiler	soul flenser	power-stealing horror	normal	78
9	wrecker	drider warrior	trained as both elven spellcaster and spidery killer	large	54
10	spoiler	flensemaster	masterful power-stealing horror	normal	78

Adventure in the City of Swords!



Axis—mighty capital of the Dragon Empire! Here, the markets flow with goods and gold, ambitious nobles rise and fall within the Emperor's court, knives flash in reeking alleys, and gladiators' weapons clash to the roar of crowds—while the metallic dragons who guard the Empire watch over it all.

Crown of Axis is an introductory 13th Age adventure for 1st level heroes by Wade Rockett (Temple of the Sun Cabal, 13th Age Game Master's Screen and Resource Book). It can be played as a one-shot or the start of a campaign; and it is customizable based on characters' icon relationships.





Those who failfo learп fromhistory are doomedfo be eaten by it.

The game is called 13th Age—so, what's in those twelve previous ages? What fantastic treasures, brooding monsters, perilous dungeons, and ancient secrets survive from past centuries? Which now-vanished icons shaped history, and what legacies did they leave behind?

The Book of Ages, designed by Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan (Eyes of the Stone Thief), includes a collaborative method for designing your campaign's ancient history and producing a chronology of past ages; a wealth of legacies, legends, and lairs to trouble the present day; prompts, suggestions, and random tables to spur creativity; more than a dozen sample ages with new icons, monsters, treasures, and powers; seven new player character races; and new class powers, spells, feats, and talents!

Pelgrane Press





Ages ago, when the elves were still united, the Elf Queen locked away a portion of her power in a magical vault. In hindsight, this may not have been a good idea; in the chaotic 13th age, it has turned out to be a *terrible* idea.

Elven Towers is a championtier 13th Age adventure for 3 to 6 adventurers by Cal Moore (*High Magic & Low Cunning*, *The Crown Commands; Fire* and Faith). It includes plotlines and options for adventures throughout the Queen's Wood, with multiple elven-themed encounters you can use in any campaign.

Recover the hidden power of the Elf Queen!





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Once You Enter the Underworld, It Never Truly Leaves You

The Dragon Empire is a thin slice of land above a vast world with its own rules and rulers: welcome to the underworld!

Will you find adventure or misery in Underland? Treasure or death in the kingdoms of the Hollow Realms? Truth or fatal illusion in the poisoned caverns of the Deeps?

While leaving room for your campaign's own stories, we've uncovered some of the underworld's secrets for 13th Age:

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You'll also find rules for traveling in the underworld which include ways to make travel montages more interesting (and hazardous!)—and advice for GMs who want to create adventures and campaigns set in the world below.

The passage downward lies ahead. A chill wind rises from the depths. Mutter one last prayer to the Gods of Light, set your torches ablaze, and enter the underworld!