

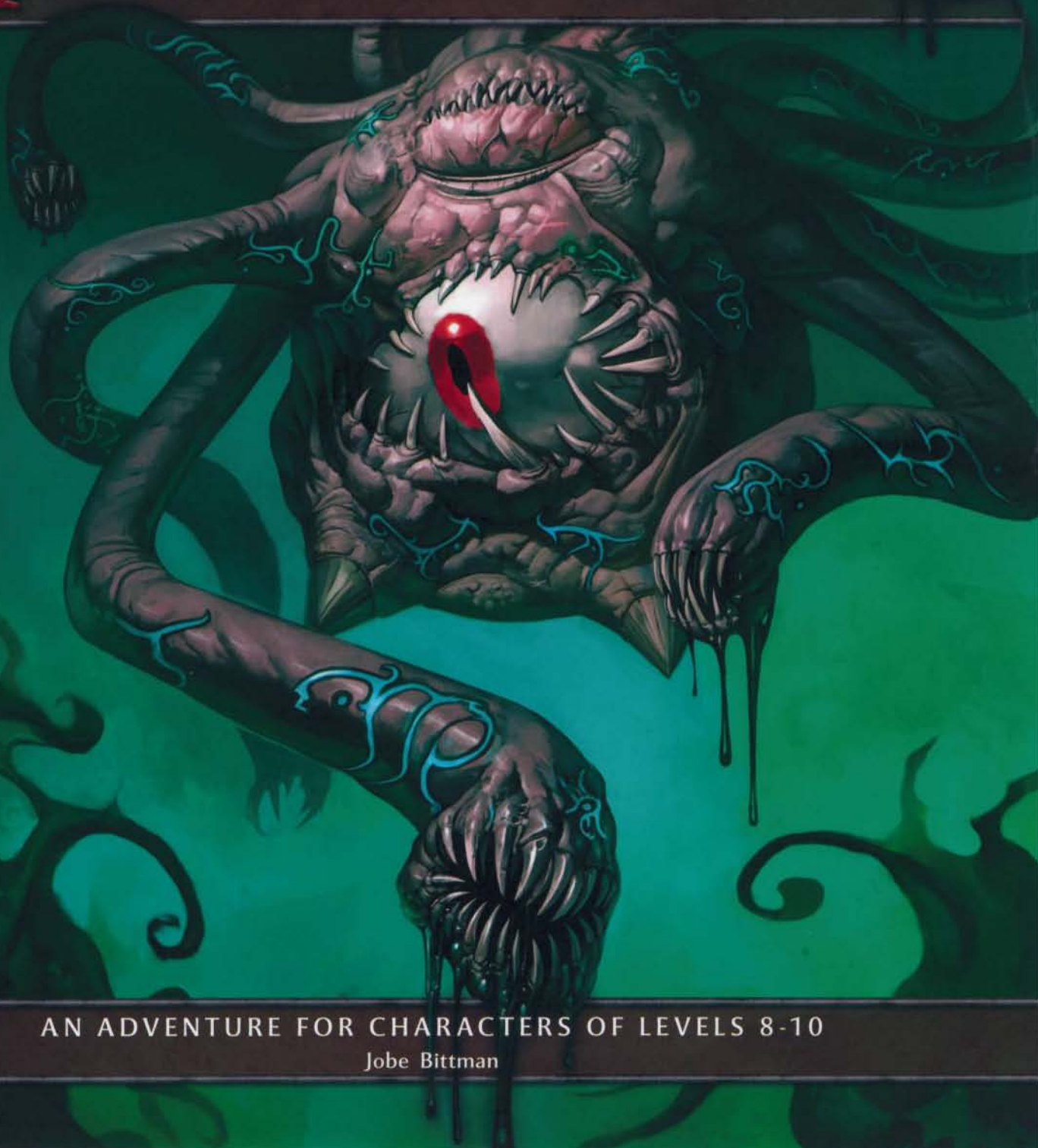
A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

AGE 12+



## DEAD IN THE EYE



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF LEVELS 8-10

Jobe Bittman

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# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup>

## DEAD IN THE EYE



ROLEPLAYING GAME ADVENTURE

Jobe Bittman





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## INTRODUCTION

*“There are things this world was not meant to see. Have you tasted of the gibbering sea of madness or heard the screams of stars? If you had, you would not ask foolish questions. Some things can never be unseen. That is why we fight. That is why we bleed. So our children may live yet another day in ignorance of the Far Realm.”*

—Arak Logan, defender of the Celestian Order

A powerful beholder and its followers are cutting a swath of murder and mayhem across the countryside, but a secret society of primal protectors is hot on the group’s trail. The protectors have cornered the villains in a cave, but they haven’t flushed them out yet. The leader of the protectors has sent emissaries into the surrounding lands looking for champions to deal with the threat.

“Dead in the Eye” is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure designed for a party of five characters of levels 8–10. The adventure is based in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting in the Thornwood, not far from the Plaguewrought Land. It can be relocated to any setting that has been touched by the Spellplague.

## BACKGROUND

The Keepers of the Celestian Order (see *Dragon* 375), a secret society of protectors of the natural world, has stood as a silent bulwark against incursions from the Far Realm for decades. The order’s hierarchy is decentralized and opaque even to many of its members. Composed of several smaller clandestine groups, the organization includes the Concord of Swords, the Black Arrows, and the Tigers of Light. All work in concert to eradicate threats from the Far Realm, but the affiliation of each group within the Celestian Order is known only to the core leadership of the member groups. The organization’s structure is critical to its survival. If agents of the Far Realm learned of a group’s affiliation to the order, they would destroy the group.

Today, the ranks of the Celestian Order are thinning while the agents of the Far Realm grow in power. Sensing weakness in the order, powerful beings from the Far Realm have started raiding the world in earnest. The Black Arrows, a Celestian Order group operating in the Vilhon Wilds, recently learned that a powerful beholder known as Omaranthax was spotted, along with its minions, near the Plaguewrought Land. Arak Logan, the leader of the Black Arrows, set out in immediate pursuit.

## Omaranthax

Omaranthax has battled the Celestian Order more than once, and the cruelty of the beholder has grown into legend as a result of past conflict. The most notable encounter occurred many years ago in the Raurin Desert when Omaranthax assaulted the oasis town of Ragheb in the dead of night. The beholder sought to steal a large amount of a strange elixir known as *had-drum*, which is distilled from dragon blood. One of the beholder’s more infamous tactics in its successful attempt at theft was collapsing a portion of the city’s stormwall on frightened citizens. Alzundra, a tiefling protector of the town, turned back the follow-up attacks with the assistance of the Tigers of Light, but it was already too late to foil the beholder’s theft. When the sun rose over the oasis, no less than a thousand corpses were strewn across the smoldering rubble of the city.

Although the Celestians can only guess at Omaranthax’s motives for the theft, the beholder schemes to gain the strength to further its crusade against all people of the natural world. After the attack at Ragheb, Omaranthax disappeared into the Underdark for years, researching arcane rituals, and it has since strengthened both itself and its ability to fulfill its long-term plans.

Now the beholder is nearly ready to act. Omaranthax created a dangerous new ritual to magnify its destructive magic. It then traveled to the Plaguewrought Land to harness the raw power of the Spellplague and amplify the ritual’s effects, but it was unprepared for the enormous toll the resulting magic would take on its form. The unbridled power of the Spellplague mutated the beholder’s body beyond recognition. Omaranthax’s eyes exploded in a violent burst of blue energy. Fanged jaws burst from its eye stalks. Its empty central eye socket sprouted multiple sets of fangs. Blue light snaked through its veins, bright enough to glow through its thick skin. A new eye emerged from its jaws. The beholder has fleeting visions that allow it to spy on its enemies remotely. Omaranthax might be disfigured beyond recognition, but it is rapidly transforming into something greater.

The Black Arrows recently found Omaranthax’s trail heading west into Winterwood. At Thornwash, the defenders attempted to flank Omaranthax and its minions, but the beholder fled north, leaving some of its followers behind to fight. The Black Arrows suffered many losses as they harried the beholder’s entourage in a running battle.

Keeping out of sight, the beholder crossed into the Thornwood and disappeared into a cave in the Cloven Mountains. After the Black Arrows caught up to it, one of their scouts determined that the cave had no exit. At last, the Black Arrows had Omaranthax trapped. Or so they thought.

The group immediately began fortifying its position outside the cave to prevent the beholder's escape. Since then, the beholder has tested those who have it trapped in the cave, but it has not broken through the Black Arrows' blockade. Omaranthax's foul-spawn minions are repelling all attempts to extract the beholder, though. In the last assault, a team of the Black Arrows' hardest warriors successfully infiltrated the cave. No sign of the team has been seen for two days.

## SYNOPSIS

Arak Logan, leader of the Black Arrows, has trapped a powerful creature from the Far Realm in a cave. His forces are weakened, and he needs the heroes to help him defeat the beholder. To draw the characters into this adventure, you can set up a scenario in which a messenger begs the party to return with her to the cave.

When the characters arrive, Logan enlists them to kill or capture Omaranthax. To defeat the beholder, the characters must break through the line of foul-spawn defending the cave mouth. Beyond the antechamber, Omaranthax has placed powerful magic wards to delay its pursuers. Once the characters solve the mystery of the ward, they can proceed deeper into the complex.

In a side cavern, the characters might run afoul of a cave roper. The roper ate the last group who entered, but one survivor offers the party a small amount of aid.

Deeper still, the party tracks Omaranthax through holes he has created in a desperate effort to escape. His foulspawn cohorts have set up an ambush designed to flank the party.

When the adventurers catch up with the beholder, they discover not one beholder but four (three of which are actually gas spores). Omaranthax's physiology has been hideously warped by its exposure to the Plaguewrought Land, and it is slowly transforming into something else. It demands the adventurers submit to captivity or be destroyed.

A vicious battle ensues. Near the middle of the battle, Omaranthax fires at the ceiling, triggering a collapse. The characters have to make the difficult decision to capture the beholder while stalactites fall around them or finish off their dangerous adversary before escaping.

## QUESTS

Characters can gain additional experience points by completing the follow quests.

### Bring Back the Ghost

**9th-level Major Quest (400 XP/character)**

Arak Logan, who needs to question the beholder, can provide the characters with a tool to bring back Omaranthax's spirit for later use in ritual magic.

### Find the Lost

**10th-level Minor Quest (100 XP/character)**

A team of Black Arrows infiltrated the cave two days ago but has not been heard from since then. Rescue or discover the fate of the team to complete the quest.

## EVENTS

This adventure consists of a series of events meant to be run in the order presented below.

### Event 1: Black Blockade

#### Roleplaying Encounter

The adventure begins once the heroes reach the forest clearing where the Black Arrows have trapped the beholder and its minions.

**To begin the adventure, read:**

*Dense forest opens ahead into an expansive clearing, and a sheer cliff at the foot of the Cloven Mountains borders it on one side. The clearing bustles with activity as groups of people drag large tress to add to the palisade they're constructing around a cave. Wooden spikes jut from the wall, pointing toward the cave.*

*A bald, grizzled half-elf warrior with one arm in a sling barks orders at one work party while directing them with his good arm. When he notices you, he waves for you to approach him.*

### Arak Logan

Arak Logan is the leader of the Black Arrows, a splinter cell of the Celestian Order. (He would never admit this fact to those outside the order.) Arak's mission is to defeat Omaranthax at all costs.

The half-elf is bald and scarred, and he has a squinty left eye. He is also ornery and stubborn. As a young man, an encounter with the mind-altering terror of the Far Realm forever changed him. Rather than go mad, he locked away the trauma deep in his mind, but it manifests as a burning desire to destroy all aberrant creatures. Arak has a good heart, but his experience left him unbalanced. He is prone to

ramble venomously about the horrific sights he has witnessed in his career.

Arak's sword arm was broken in an earlier skirmish, and it prevents him from leading another assault. Arak is also concerned about the fate of the team of Black Arrows that has not returned from the cave for days, but he cannot spare anyone to search for them. Due to such losses, the outlook looks grim for the Black Arrows, but Arak is unflappable in his conviction that the beholder will not escape.

Arak hopes to convince the adventurers to hunt down Omaranthax while the Black Arrows hold the line. He has little to offer in return, but he does his best to impress upon the adventurers the danger the beholder presents to the world. Knowing that the beholder has been engaged in magical research, Arak openly speculates that Omaranthax and its entourage probably have a decent amount of treasure.

If the party agrees to infiltrate the cave, Arak makes two requests. Capturing Omaranthax's spirit would be a huge victory for the Black Arrows, who could then use rituals to interrogate and study the beholder. Arak also wants members of his warrior team rescued or to hear news of their fate. Both of these requests are quests in the adventure.

The Black Arrow commander doesn't downplay the difficulty of capturing the beholder, but he offers a *dead words manacle* to aid in the quest.

#### Dead Words Manacle Level 10 Uncommon

*This cold iron manacle whispers of its shadowed past.*

Price: 5,000 gp

Wondrous Item

##### Property

You gain a +5 item bonus to the Religion check for a Speak with Dead ritual that treats the manacle as a creature's corpse. If you are able to ask the manacle any questions as a result of the Speak with Dead ritual, you can ask one extra question.

##### ⬇ Attack Power ⬆ Daily (Standard Action)

Attack: Melee 1 (one bloodied creature granting combat advantage to you); +13 vs. Reflex

Hit: You attach the manacle to the target. If the target dies while wearing the manacle, the manacle is considered to be the target's corpse for the purpose of a Speak with Dead ritual. The manacle can act as the corpse of only one target in this way, so it is always considered to be the corpse of the most recent target to die while wearing it. The manacle can be removed from the target only during a rest and as a standard action.

Miss: This power is not expended.

## Lore

Arak Logan and the Black Arrows freely share their knowledge. They know the following information.

- ◆ Arak Logan recounts the tale of the attack on Ragheb, as detailed in the "Background" section.
- ◆ An archer claims to have caught a glimpse of Omaranthax before it entered the cave. She insists that the beholder looked gravely wounded.
- ◆ A drunk half-orc insists Omaranthax isn't a beholder. It's some sort of plaguechanged dragon.
- ◆ A scout saw Omaranthax breathe fire, but the scout died in a skirmish two days ago.
- ◆ A malodorous dwarf alleges that Omaranthax is a mutated vampire. Nothing with that many teeth could be anything else. He gives the party a bunch of garlic bulbs and tells them to wear them around their necks to ward off the beholder.

## Conclusion

When the characters are ready, the Black Arrows direct them to the palisade wall near the cave.

### When the adventurers are ready, read:

*Whispers catch the wind, and heads turn as you approach the blockade wall. Members of the Black Arrows slowly part to allow you to pass. The defenders are weary and beaten down. Some of the injured look as if they would never rise were they to rest their heads for even a moment. A grimy soldier unbars a makeshift door in the defensive wall, which is hastily slammed behind you after you pass through it.*

*Beyond the palisade, the enormous opening in the mountainside looms ominously. You sense no movement, but a vile presence permeates the air. Several hundred feet of rocky ground between the wall and the cave is spattered with dried blood and viscera. Among the bodies of twisted aberrant humanoids, a tiefling corpse that no one has dared to retrieve lies near the mouth of the cave. The foul reek of filth and death threaten to choke you.*

## Event 2: Storming the Cave

Combat Encounter Level 12 (3,850 XP)

Omaranthax's foulspawn have made several attempts to break through the blockade, but the Black Arrows have beaten them back each time. The foulspawn have retreated back into the cavern to regroup for the next attack. Having faced one team of Black Arrow warriors, they lurk in hiding so that invaders do not immediately see them.

**Light:** Dim light from the scintillating fungi.

**Monsters:** 2 foulspawn berserkers (B), 1 foulspawn warpcaller (F), 10 foulspawn wretches (W).

**Hazards:** 4 far mushroom patches.



### When the characters approach the area, read:

*The enormous cavern gradually grows smaller. You hear the patter of rapid footsteps, and then all is silent. The passage opens into a chamber with a high ceiling. Shadowy niches dot the walls from ceiling to floor. Mushroom patches faintly pulse with the colors of the rainbow. Ahead of you, large pillars of rock divide the room and block vision. The vile odor grows stronger.*

**Niches:** The rock niches are 5 feet above the ground. If a wretch hides within one, a character who can see into the niche might notice the creature (DC 25 passive Perception). Looking into a niche requires the character to take a minor action, but if the character does so, he or she automatically sees any wretch within the niche.

**Rubble:** Large rocks strewn across the floor create an area of difficult terrain.

**Treasure:** The warpcaller has a leather satchel. Among other oddments, it contains an iridescent black pearl (500 gp).

**Tactics:** All the monsters prefer to wait until invaders come deeper into the chamber before attacking. Given their positions and aggressiveness, the berserkers are most likely to be spotted first.

Wretches concealed in niches wait for the party to pass, delaying if necessary. If they go unnoticed, they clamber out to attack the characters from behind

with combat advantage on their initial attack. Thereafter, they teleport around to gain combat advantage.

Berserkers fight savagely to keep the party from reaching the warpcaller, even provoking opportunity attacks to push the characters back. The berserkers prefer to stay within 5 squares of the warpcaller to gain the benefit of its *warped sending* power.

The warpcaller always starts by unleashing *warp-mind field* in the characters' path. It places the zone so that the characters have to move deeper into the room to avoid it, possibly onto the far mushroom patches, and to prevent escape. After that, it sustains the zone and uses *warped sending*, resorting to *twisted dismissal* to escape a melee attacker.

## Far Mushroom Patches

When Omaranthax passed through the area, energy crackling from its body infused patches of mushrooms with potent Far Realm energy infused with the twisted magic the beholder now has.

### 4 Far Mushroom Patches

### Level 9 Hazard

Terrain

XP 400 each

Detect automatic

Initiative –

Immune see Countermeasures

Identify (Arcana, Dungeoneering, Insight, or Nature)

- ◆ DC 17: The character recognizes that the taint of the Far Realm has corrupted the mushrooms, making them a hazard.
- ◆ DC 25: The character understands the reality manipulation countermeasure is available before he or she is attacked.

### TRIGGERED ACTIONS

◆ Attack (poison, teleportation) ◆ At-Will

*Trigger:* A non-aberrant creature enters a square of the hazard or starts its turn there.

*Attack (Opportunity Action):* Melee 1 (the triggering creature); +12 vs. Will

*Hit:* Roll a d6 to determine the effect.

- ▣ The target is blinded until the end of its next turn.
- ▣ The target gains phasing until the end of its next turn.
- ▣ The target takes ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends).
- ▣ The target teleports up to 5 squares.
- ▣ The target is restrained until the end of its next turn.
- ▣ The target gains 10 temporary hit points.

*Miss:* 5 poison damage.

### COUNTERMEASURES

◆ **Attack:** Each square of mushrooms has AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 5, Will –, and 1 hit point. The mushrooms are immune to necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, and ongoing damage. If a square of the hazard is destroyed, it reappears at the end of the attacker's next turn.

◆ **Reality Manipulation:** When hit by the hazard's attack, a character can attempt a DC 25 Arcana or Insight check (immediate interrupt). *Success:* The character can roll 2d6 for the effect, taking the most favorable result.

<b>2 Foulspawn Berserkers (B)</b>		<b>Level 9 Soldier</b>
Medium aberrant humanoid		XP 400 each
HP 102; <b>Bloodied</b> 51		<b>Initiative</b> +7
AC 25, <b>Fortitude</b> 23 (25 while bloodied), <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 20		<b>Perception</b> +0
Speed 7 (9 while bloodied)		Low-light vision
Immune fear		
<b>TRAITS</b>		
☼ <b>Berserker Aura</b> ◆ <b>Aura</b> 1		
When a creature within the aura makes a melee attack, it must choose its target at random from the potential targets in range.		
<b>Mental Feedback</b> (psychic)		
Whenever a creature targets the berserker with a charm attack, the creature and the berserker each take 10 psychic damage.		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
Ⓢ <b>Greatsword</b> (weapon) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC, or +16 vs. AC while the berserker is bloodied		
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, or 2d10 + 10 while the berserker is bloodied.		
⚡ <b>Berserker Charge</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The berserker charges, and the charge attack deals 5 extra damage on a hit.		
<b>Str</b> 18 (+8)	<b>Dex</b> 12 (+5)	<b>Wis</b> 3 (+0)
<b>Con</b> 22 (+10)	<b>Int</b> 8 (+3)	<b>Cha</b> 12 (+5)
<b>Alignment</b> chaotic evil		<b>Languages</b> Deep Speech, telepathy 10
<b>Equipment</b> greatsword		

<b>10 Foulspawn Wretches (W)</b>		<b>Level 7 Minion Skirmisher</b>
Small aberrant humanoid		XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		<b>Initiative</b> +10
AC 21, <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 19		<b>Perception</b> +5
Speed 6, teleport 2		Low-light vision
<b>TRAITS</b>		
<b>Ceaseless Murmurs</b>		
Any enemy adjacent to two or more foulspawn wretches takes a -2 penalty to Will.		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
Ⓢ <b>Claw</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC		
Hit: 7 damage, and a foulspawn wretch ally within 6 squares can teleport to a square adjacent to the target.		
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>		
<b>Screaming Echo</b> (teleportation)		
Trigger: The wretch drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect ( <i>Immediate Interrupt</i> ): The wretch teleports a nonminion ally within 6 squares of itself to the square the wretch occupies.		
<b>Str</b> 14 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 20 (+8)	<b>Wis</b> 14 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+6)	<b>Cha</b> 17 (+6)
<b>Alignment</b> evil		<b>Languages</b> Deep Speech, telepathy 10

<b>Foulspawn Warpcaller (F)</b>		<b>Level 12 Controller (Leader)</b>
Medium aberrant humanoid		XP 700
HP 126; <b>Bloodied</b> 63		<b>Initiative</b> +9
AC 26, <b>Fortitude</b> 24, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 24		<b>Perception</b> +9
Speed 6, teleport 3		Darkvision
<b>TRAITS</b>		
☼ <b>Droning Pipe</b> ◆ <b>Aura</b> 3		
Enemies within the aura gain vulnerable 5 psychic.		
<b>STANDARD</b>		
Ⓢ <b>Bite</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC		
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage.		
☼ <b>Warped Sending</b> (psychic, teleportation) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and one of the warpcaller's aberrant allies within 5 squares of the target teleports to a square adjacent to the target.		
⚡ <b>Twisted Dismissal</b> (psychic, teleportation) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). The warpcaller then teleports the target 2 squares.		
☼ <b>Warpmind Field</b> (psychic, zone) ◆ <b>Encounter</b>		
Attack: Area burst 2 within 5 (enemies in the burst); +15 vs. Will		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage.		
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the warpcaller's next turn. Any enemy that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 10 psychic damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn. In addition, any enemy within the zone can attack only targets within 3 squares of it. As a move action, the warpcaller can move the zone up to 4 squares.		
Sustain <i>Minor</i> : The zone persists until the end of the warpcaller's next turn.		
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +15		
<b>Str</b> 19 (+10)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+9)	<b>Wis</b> 17 (+9)
<b>Con</b> 22 (+12)	<b>Int</b> 18 (+10)	<b>Cha</b> 19 (+10)
<b>Alignment</b> evil		<b>Languages</b> Deep Speech, telepathy 10
<b>Equipment</b> musical pipe		

## Event 3: Far Maze

### Exploration Encounter (100 XP/character)

Omaranthax placed a ward on the tunnels leading deeper into the complex. The ward twists reality to create a false maze for those not loyal to the beholder.

#### When the party enters the area, read:

*A snaking passageway with a low ceiling meanders for roughly a hundred feet before it widens into a larger cavern. On the far end of this larger cavern, tunnels branch to the left, the middle, and the right. Each passage twists abruptly after about twenty feet, making it impossible to see where it leads from the larger cavern.*

### Running the Far Maze

The ward manifests in a series of three identical chambers. In each room, only one of three northern passages leads to the next room in the series. All other exits loop back to the southern entry passage in room A. Characters can walk back through the passage by which they entered a room to reach the previous room. In room A, however, walking back



through the southern entry passage leads the party to the Event 2 encounter area.

To successfully navigate the ward, the characters must follow a specific pattern. They must use the left passage (shaded in blue on the map) in room A, and the right passage (also shaded in blue) in room B. No matter which exit they first choose in room C, the characters loop back to the southern entry passage in room A. The second exit they choose in room C, though, leads out of the false maze. Omaranthax designed this simple ruse to prevent invaders from guessing the correct sequence on the first pass, while still allowing its minions to come back to him through a convoluted means.

Take notes while running this encounter. Once the players discover that the maze consists of multiple rooms, they'll come up with ways to identify rooms and other strategies to navigate the maze. Write everything they do down so that you know how to react to and describe the results of later actions. Your notes help the ward puzzle adhere to its own internal logic. If it fails to do so, the players might not deduce the solution. In the unlikely event that the characters introduce a paradox you cannot resolve, the magic of the ward forces them to loop back to room A and start the maze over.

Each time the party walks through a northern exit passage, reread the read-aloud text. Using your notes on any changes the characters might have made to each room, you can add descriptions of such changes. These clues help the players know where the characters are in the maze.

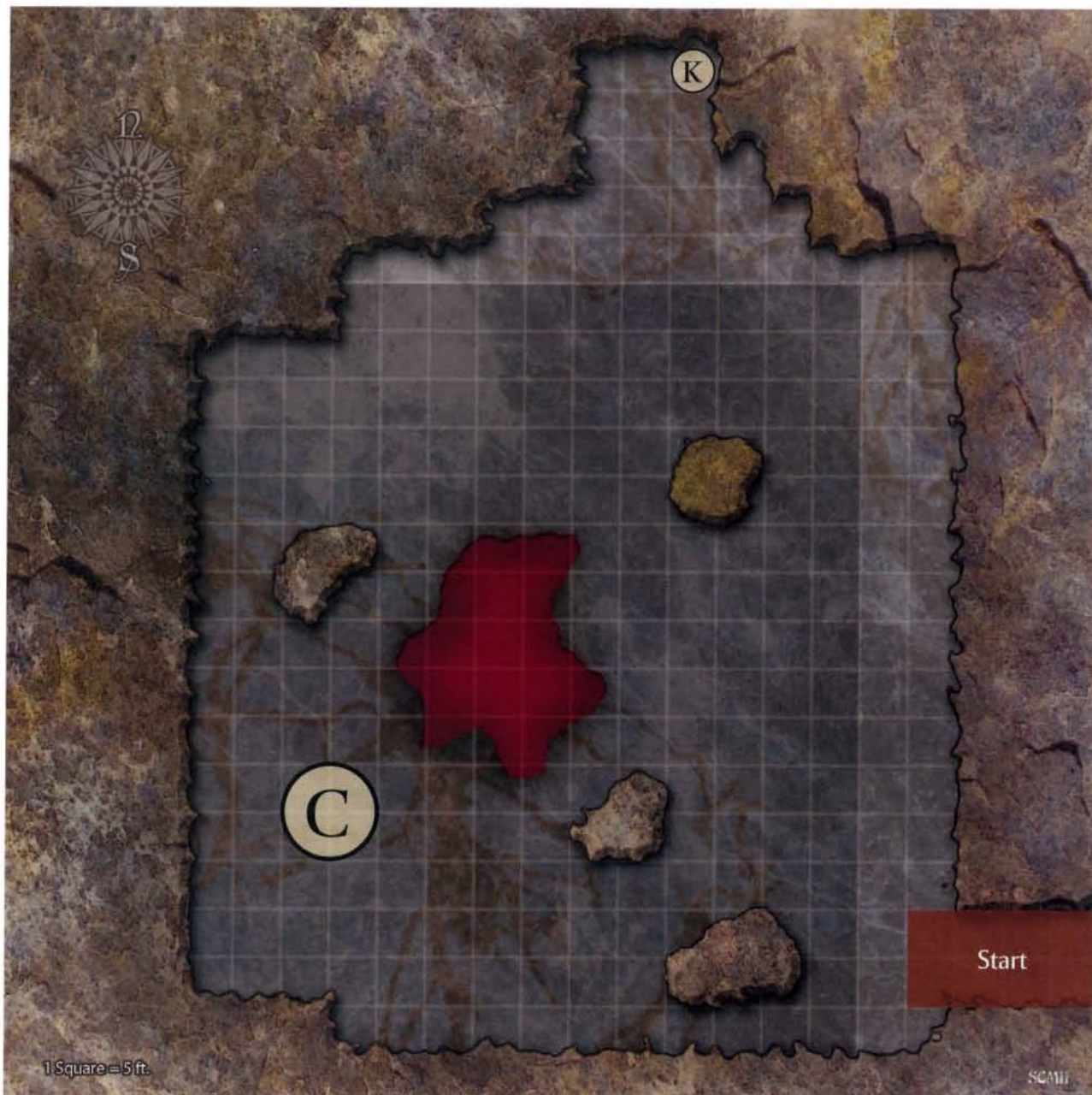
**Example:** Start with five characters in room A. One walks down the left passage, one walks down the middle passage, and one walks down the right passage. Two stay in room A. After a few moments, the adventurers who walked middle and right walk up room A's southern entry passage behind the two party members who stayed in room A. The character who went left finds an empty room that seems to be identical to the last. She could shout back to the rest of the party to go down the left tunnel.

## Skill Checks

The following skill checks can come into play while the party traverses the ward.

**Arcana DC 17 (Detect Magic):** The entire area gives off a magical aura. The magic affects the mind and senses. It could involve dimensional travel, too. The magic has no source.

**Dungeoneering DC 17:** Although the passages between chambers twist from side to side, they proceed in a single overall direction. After the characters have passed through any northern passage, they realize that the passages are not long enough to circle back on themselves the way they seem to.



**Perception DC 17:** The second time the heroes enter a given room, success on this check means the character spots the earlier footprints leading through the passages they have already traversed.

### Conclusion

When the characters successfully traverse the maze, they gain 100 XP each.

## Event 4: Black Arrow Found

**Roleplaying Encounter and Combat Encounter**  
Level 6 (1,400 XP)

Almost all of the team of Black Arrows warriors died in this chamber when they ran afoul of a roper. The team's lone survivor huddles in an alcove at the northern end of the room, too frightened to attempt escape.

**Light:** None. The descriptions assume the characters have a light source.

**Monsters:** 1 cave roper (C).

**Other Creatures:** Kilna Stumpshine (K).

**When the characters can see the area, read:**

*The way ahead widens into a high-ceilinged grotto filled with stalactites and stalagmites. Natural features here seem warped, perhaps by the passing of Omaranthax and its forces. One of the stalagmites leans askew, and a slow drip of water sends echoes reverberating through the chamber. The glint of metal on the floor draws your eye to weapons, shields, and bits of equipment and armor scattered around the area.*

**Highest Passive Perception:** The character spots the pool and identifies it as blood. Those who look up spot the roper's lair. See "Blood Pool" below.

**Perception DC 28:** The character spots the distinctive outline of a roper's solitary eye and maw.

**When the characters can see Kilna, read:**

*Huddled in a corner of an alcove, hugging his knees, is a blood-spattered gnome in leather armor. When he spots you, his eyes widen and he weakly extends a trembling hand in your direction before falling back against the wall.*

**Blood Pool:** Half-eaten remains that the cave roper has impaled on stalactites are the source of the dripping sound. Dripping blood has gathered in a slick near the center of the room.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is 20 feet high, although some stalactites hang down 5 or 10 feet.

**Treasure:** Near its napping place, the roper has 450 gp, two opals (500 gp each), and one magic item of the party's level + 1d4.

## Roper Interactions

Bloated and lethargic from its recent feast, the roper is napping. If the characters succeed on a DC 17 group Stealth check, the roper remains asleep. If they fail, the monster awakens. It then glares at the party and mocks them.

If it's awake, and you decide it can speak to the characters, the sated roper demands treasure for safe passage through its territory. It's willing to take anything that's worth around 500 gp, such as the pearl from the last encounter. The characters can also try to persuade (DC 20 Bluff or Diplomacy) or bully (DC 28 Intimidate) the roper into letting them pass. Base the check on roleplaying, and allow a failure or two before initiating any combat.

If asked, the roper can confirm that Omaranthax passed through the cavern with a large number of foulspawn. The aberrant creatures failed to notice the roper in its stalagmite disguise.

If the characters attack the roper, it fights back. The shaded area on the map shows its initial reach. Given its fullness, it prefers not to move, instead attacking those within its reach, favoring anyone carrying garlic. If hard pressed, it retreats to fight from the ceiling.

<b>Cave Roper (C)</b>		<b>Level 12 Elite Controller</b>
Large elemental magical beast (earth)		XP 1,400
HP 252; Bloodied 126		Initiative +7
AC 26, Fortitude 26, Reflex 21, Will 23		Perception +9
Speed 2, climb 2 (spider climb)		Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1		
TRAITS		
<b>Tentacle Release</b>		
Before a creature makes an attack roll against the roper, it can choose to target one of the roper's tentacles. The tentacles use the same defenses as the roper. If the attack hits, it does not deal damage or otherwise affect the roper, but one of the roper's grabs end (of the attacker's choice).		
<b>Stony Body</b>		
The roper can retract its tentacles and close its eye and mouth to resemble a natural rock formation. While the roper is on a horizontal rock surface, a creature must succeed at a DC 28 Perception check to see through the roper's disguise.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Tentacle</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Requirement: The roper must have fewer than two creatures grabbed.		
Attack: Melee 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, and the roper grabs the target (escape DC 20). Until the grab ends, the target is weakened.		
† <b>Double Attack</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The roper uses <i>tentacle</i> twice.		
† <b>Bite</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the roper); +17 vs. AC		
Hit: 4d12 + 12 damage.		
Miss: Half damage.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
† <b>Reel</b> ⊕ <b>At-Will</b> (1/round)		
Attack: Melee 10 (each creature grabbed by the roper); +17 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: The roper pulls the target up to 5 squares.		
Skills Stealth +12		
Str 19 (+10)	Dex 12 (+7)	Wis 16 (+9)
Con 22 (+12)	Int 11 (+6)	Cha 9 (+5)
Alignment evil		Languages Primordial

## Rescuing Kilna

Kilna Stumpshine is the last living member of the Black Arrow infiltration team. If the roper is asleep or has an accord with the characters, Kilna can leave with the party without a problem. Still in shock from the bloodbath he witnessed, the gnome can recount the tale of his party's unfortunate end. He begs to be taken back to the safe route out. Once there, he gives the party two *potions of healing* and rushes to leave.

Rescuing Kilna fulfills the "Find the Lost" quest.

## Event 5: Tunnel Ambush

Combat Encounter Level 10 (2,550 XP)

Omaranthax, realizing it is trapped, is desperately blasting through walls trying to find a tunnel leading back to the surface, but its recent transformation has impaired its three-dimensional thinking, and so it hasn't yet occurred to the beholder to bore upward. A vision alerted the beholder to the characters' pursuit. It ordered some of its retinue to kill the pursuers or never return. The foulspawn rear guard has set up an ambush designed to outflank the adventurers. They await the characters in the dark and as far outside the area of most light sources as they can.

**Light:** None.

**Monsters:** 2 foulspawn berserkers (B), 1 foulspawn hulk (H), 1 foulspawn seer (S), 6 foulspawn wretches (W).

### When the party reaches the fork, read:

*The passageway widens as you reach a crossroads of sorts. The main passage continues on. On your left, a circular hole roughly ten feet in diameter has been bored through the rock wall. Fine dust covers the area, and the tracks of warped humanoids, small to large, mark the dust.*

The characters have only few moments to explore before the foulspawn attack.

**Arcana DC 28 (Trained Only):** Rock in the bore hole has been magically disintegrated.

**Perception DC 17 (Group Check):** If half or more of the characters succeed, the foulspawn fail to surprise the party when they attack. If not, the foulspawn gain a surprise round.

### When the foulspawn attack, read:

*Shouts in a guttural tongue come from the tunnel ahead. A pair of greasy, purple-skinned warriors in black hide armor charge around the bend, each wielding a bone greatsword. Behind them, a corpulent figure in filthy robes traces sigils in the air with a staff that looks like a humanoid spine.*

*At the end of the bore hole's tunnel, a hulking, skinless figure with bulging muscles moves into view. The creature looses a blood-curdling howl of rage and barrels down the tunnel toward you.*

*Small, twisted foulspawn wretches follow the larger creatures into battle.*

**Treasure:** Gathering the contents of the monsters' satchels yields 300 gp, plus a bone carving of a beholder with gem eyes (1,500 gp).

**Tactics:** The foulspawn work together to catch the characters from every possible angle of attack. Initially heedless of opportunity attacks, the hulk and the berserkers move among the adventurers to sow confusion and tie up as many characters as possible in melee. The wretches teleport to do the same,



looking for flanking opportunities. Meanwhile, the seer hangs back far enough to avoid melee but to keep allies in its aura. It teleports to escape melee attackers or damaging attacks.

<b>2 Foulspawn Berserkers (B)</b>		<b>Level 9 Soldier</b>
Medium aberrant humanoid		XP 400 each
HP 102; Bloodied 51	<b>Initiative</b> +7	
AC 25, Fortitude 23 (25 while bloodied), Reflex 20, Will 20	<b>Perception</b> +0	
Speed 7 (9 while bloodied)	Low-light vision	
Immune fear		
<b>TRAITS</b>		
☼ <b>Berserker Aura</b> ✦ <b>Aura 1</b>		
When a creature within the aura makes a melee attack, it must choose its target at random from the potential targets in range.		
<b>Mental Feedback</b> (psychic)		
Whenever a creature targets the berserker with a charm attack, the creature and the berserker each take 10 psychic damage.		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
⊕ <b>Greatsword</b> (weapon) ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +14 vs. AC, or +16 vs. AC while the berserker is bloodied		
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, or 2d10 + 10 damage while the berserker is bloodied.		
† <b>Berserker Charge</b> ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The berserker charges, and the charge attack deals 5 extra damage on a hit.		
Str 18 (+8)	Dex 12 (+5)	Wis 3 (+0)
Con 22 (+10)	Int 8 (+3)	Cha 12 (+5)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10		
Equipment greatsword		

<b>6 Foulspawn Wretches (W)</b>		<b>Level 7 Minion Skirmisher</b>
Small aberrant humanoid		XP 75 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	<b>Initiative</b> +10	
AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 19	<b>Perception</b> +5	
Speed 6, teleport 2	Low-light vision	
<b>TRAITS</b>		
<b>Ceaseless Murmurs</b>		
Any enemy adjacent to two or more foulspawn wretches takes a -2 penalty to Will.		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
⊕ <b>Claw</b> ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC		
Hit: 7 damage, and a foulspawn wretch ally within 6 squares can teleport to a square adjacent to the target.		
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>		
<b>Screaming Echo</b> (teleportation)		
Trigger: The wretch drops to 0 hit points.		
Effect ( <i>Immediate Interrupt</i> ): The wretch teleports a nonminion ally within 6 squares of itself to the square the wretch occupies.		
Str 14 (+5)	Dex 20 (+8)	Wis 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6)	Int 16 (+6)	Cha 17 (+6)
Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10		

<b>Foulspawn Seer (S)</b>		<b>Level 11 Artillery (Leader)</b>
Medium aberrant humanoid		XP 600
HP 86; Bloodied 43	<b>Initiative</b> +7	
AC 25, Fortitude 21, Reflex 25, Will 23	<b>Perception</b> +9	
Speed 6	Low-light vision	
<b>TRAITS</b>		
☼ <b>Foul Insight</b> ✦ <b>Aura 10</b>		
Any ally within the aura that can hear the seer gains a +2 power bonus to one attack roll, skill check, ability check, or saving throw on its turn.		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
⊕ <b>Twisted Staff</b> (weapon) ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage, and the seer can push the target 1 square.		
✧ <b>Warp Orb</b> (psychic) ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +16 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends). If the target is already slowed, it is instead dazed (save ends).		
⚡ <b>Distortion Blast</b> ✦ <b>Encounter</b>		
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +14 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If the target is aberrant, the damage is halved.		
<b>MOVE ACTIONS</b>		
<b>Teleport</b> (teleportation) ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The seer teleports up to 3 squares.		
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>		
<b>Bend Space</b> (teleportation) ✦ <b>Recharge</b> ☼ ☼ ☼		
Trigger: An attack hits the seer.		
Effect ( <i>Immediate Interrupt</i> ): The seer teleports up to 3 squares.		
Str 10 (+5)	Dex 14 (+7)	Wis 8 (+4)
Con 14 (+7)	Int 22 (+11)	Cha 18 (+9)
Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10		
Equipment staff		

<b>Foulspawn Hulk (H)</b>		<b>Level 12 Brute</b>
Large aberrant humanoid		XP 700
HP 150; Bloodied 75	<b>Initiative</b> +8	
AC 24, Fortitude 27 (29 while bloodied), Reflex 22, Will 22	<b>Perception</b> +9	
Speed 8	Low-light vision	
Immune fear		
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>		
⊕ <b>Slam</b> ✦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC, or +19 vs. AC while the hulk is bloodied.		
Hit: 3d8 + 12 damage, or 4d8 + 15 while the hulk is bloodied.		
Str 24 (+13)	Dex 14 (+8)	Wis 7 (+4)
Con 20 (+11)	Int 7 (+4)	Cha 14 (+8)
Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10		

## Event 6: Transformation

### Combat Encounter Level 12 (3,625 XP)

With the arrival of the party, Omaranthax believes it has run out of time. Its visions have alerted it that its pursuers remain, and it has chosen this chamber to make its final stand.

**Light:** Luminescent moss growing throughout the room provides dim light.

**Monsters:** Omaranthax, warped beholder (O); 10 foulspawn wretches (W); 3 warped gas spores (G).

#### When the characters enter, read:

*Hideous laughter thunders throughout the cavern. When it dies down, a voice calls out in a croaking tongue laced with ethereal screams and echoing wind chimes. Amid the cacophony, words appear in your mind in your native tongue.*

*"Little birds, little birds!" the voice rasps. "Have you come here to peck me to death? My transformation is almost complete. What hope have you against the power of Omaranthax?"*

*A revolting sack of flesh slowly descends from the gloom. It looks similar to a beholder, but each eye stalk is tipped with a small fanged mouth dripping saliva and snapping at the air. Glowing blue sigils—spellscars—mark the creature's gray flesh. A large eye gazes from where a beholder's mouth would be. The white of the eye bulges against the ring of fangs that surrounds it.*

*"Lay down your weapons and implements of power, and you might live to see my transformation," says the creature.*

*Three more beholders bob into position around you. The creatures' features are horribly disfigured, making them almost unrecognizable. Behind them, a throng of foulspawn emerges from the shadows. The creatures beat their chests and shout insults in Deep Speech.*

### Parley with Omaranthax

Omaranthax opens a dialogue with the characters. If the party ignores the beholder and dives directly into battle, you can skip this section.

Omaranthax is arrogant. To it, the people of the Realms are mere playthings. When speaking, it often refers to itself in the third person. Omaranthax vows to spare the characters' puny lives if the group witnesses its final transformation and delivers word back to the Black Arrows. The adventurers have only to drop their weapons and implements as ordered. If the characters drop their weapons, Omaranthax demands they kick their weapons 2 squares away. After all the characters have been separated from the weapons and implements, Omaranthax orders the unarmed party murdered.

During the exchange, the characters have an opportunity to gather information.

**Insight DC 25:** The character intuits that Omaranthax is being deceptive in its vow not to harm the characters.

**Nature DC 17:** The beholders other than Omaranthax have threadlike filaments hanging from them. Success grants a +2 bonus to a monster knowledge check to identify the gas spores.

**Monster Knowledge Check:** Any character who succeeds on a trained DC 25 Arcana or Dungeoneering check identifies the fake beholders as gas spores.

### Battling Omaranthax

After the short discussion, battle inevitably begins. During the melee, Omaranthax laughs maniacally and speaks of its imminent transformation.

#### As the battle begins, read:

*The misshapen beholder laughs balefully then screams into your mind. "Kill them! Kill them all! I want their heads!"*

**Ridge:** Natural steps lead up one side of this raised area. These steps are difficult terrain. The ridge is 10 feet high (DC 15 Athletics to climb).

**Tactics:** Omaranthax uses *far rift* to split the party. It teleports weaker targets closer and drops brawny attackers adjacent to its allies. When it is bloodied, proceed to the "Finale" section below.

The aberrant gas spores have malign cunning. They grab enemies and get in position to do as much damage as possible when they die.

Omaranthax and its followers fight to the death, even when the cave begins to crash down around them (see below).

### Finale

Omaranthax transforms when first bloodied, unleashing a wave of energy that triggers a collapse of the cave.

#### When Omaranthax is first bloodied, read:

*You score a blow that unseadies Omaranthax momentarily. The beholder convulses as its bulging white eye erupts into the air at the end of a thick eye stalk, and the thing's dislocated jaw hangs limp and slavering.*

*"Hah, hah! Yes! Now I see! The power is mine!" it cries.*

*The beholder's spellscars glow rhythmically, then shine with a deep crimson light. Brilliant arcs of that light radiate in all directions, slamming into the floor, the walls, and the ceiling. The entire room shudders. Rocks begin to fall from the ceiling.*

**Cave-In:** Rocks fall from the ceiling as the room collapses. At the end of each round, roll an attack against each creature in the room; +13 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 damage; on a critical hit, the target falls prone. Then roll a d6 and subtract the number of rounds the cave-in has gone on. On a result of 0 or lower, the cave-in stops. Otherwise, the collapse continues during the next round.

**Warped Beholder (O) Level 10 Solo Artillery**

Large aberrant magical beast (blind) XP 2,500

HP 424; Bloodied 212 Initiative +10

AC 24, Fortitude 22, Reflex 22, Will 22 Perception +10

Speed 0, fly 4 (hover) Darkvision

Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2

**TRAITS**☠ **Horrifying Visage** (fear) ♦ **Aura 2**

Enemies within the aura grant combat advantage.

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⊕ **Slam** ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 2d12 + 5 damage.

Eyestalk Attack ♦ **At-Will****Effect:** Omaranthax uses two of the following attacks. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

1. **Blue Flame Wave** (force): Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +13 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 10 force damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
2. **Lightning Tongue** (lightning): Ranged 5 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 10 lightning damage, and Omaranthax pulls the target up to 5 squares.
3. **Far Rift** (psychic, teleportation): Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +15 vs. Will; 1d6 + 10 psychic damage, Omaranthax teleports the target up to 4 squares, and Omaranthax teleports up to 4 squares.
4. **Crippled Stalk**: Melee 2 (one creature); + 15 vs. AC; 2d12 + 5 damage.
5. **Disintegrate Ray**: Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
6. **Stinging Swarm** (poison): Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +13 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 10 poison damage.  
**Effect:** The blast creates a zone that is lightly obscured and lasts until the end of Omaranthax's next turn. Any enemy that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 poison damage.

7. **Plague Ray** (necrotic): Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 10 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).
8. **Cerulean Ray** (force): Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 5 force damage, Omaranthax slides the target up to 5 squares, and the target falls prone.
9. **Berserker Ray** (charm): Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Will; until the end of the target's next turn, the target must use its standard action to make an at-will attack against a random creature. Further, the target's allies provoke opportunity attacks from the target, which must make any opportunity attack it can.
10. **Freeze Ray** (cold): Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 10 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).  
**First Failed Saving Throw:** The target is petrified (save ends).

**MINOR ACTIONS**⬅ **Mind Wipe** ♦ **At-Will** (1/round)

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +13 vs. Will

Hit: The target cannot use daily attack powers and is dazed until the end of its next turn.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**↻ **Random Eyestalk** ♦ **At-Will****Trigger:** Omaranthax is conscious and an enemy starts its turn within 5 squares of him.**Effect (No Action):** Omaranthax uses one random *eyestalk attack*. He must target the triggering enemy if he can.

Str 20 (+10) Dex 21 (+10) Wis 10 (+5)

Con 18 (+9) Int 19 (+9) Cha 20 (+10)

Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10

**10 Foulspawn Wretches (W) Level 7 Minion Skirmisher**

Small aberrant humanoid XP 75 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +10

AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 19 Perception +5

Speed 6, teleport 2 Low-light vision

**TRAITS****Ceaseless Murmurs**

Any enemy adjacent to two or more foulspawn wretches takes a -2 penalty to Will.

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⊕ **Claw** ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC

Hit: 7 damage, and a foulspawn wretch ally within 6 squares can teleport to a square adjacent to the target.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS****Screaming Echo** (teleportation)**Trigger:** The wretch drops to 0 hit points.**Effect (Immediate Interrupt):** The wretch teleports a nonminion ally within 6 squares of itself to the square the wretch occupies.

Str 14 (+5) Dex 20 (+8) Wis 14 (+5)

Con 16 (+6) Int 16 (+6) Cha 17 (+6)

Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 10

**3 Warped Gas Spores (G) Level 10 Minion Brute**

Large aberrant beast (blind, plant) XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +9

AC 22, Fortitude 20, Reflex 22, Will 21 Perception +8

Speed 0, fly 4 (hover) Blindsight 10

Immune blind, gaze effects

**TRAITS**☠ **Horrifying Visage** (fear) ♦ **Aura 2**

Enemies within the aura grant combat advantage.

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⊕ **Tendrils** (poison) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC

Hit: 11 poison damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 18). While grabbing a target, the spore can use *tendrils* only against that target.**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**⬅ **Mind Spores** (poison, psychic) ♦ **At-Will****Trigger:** The spore drops to 0 hit points.**Attack (Free Action):** Close burst 2 (non-aberrant creatures in the burst); +13 vs. Will

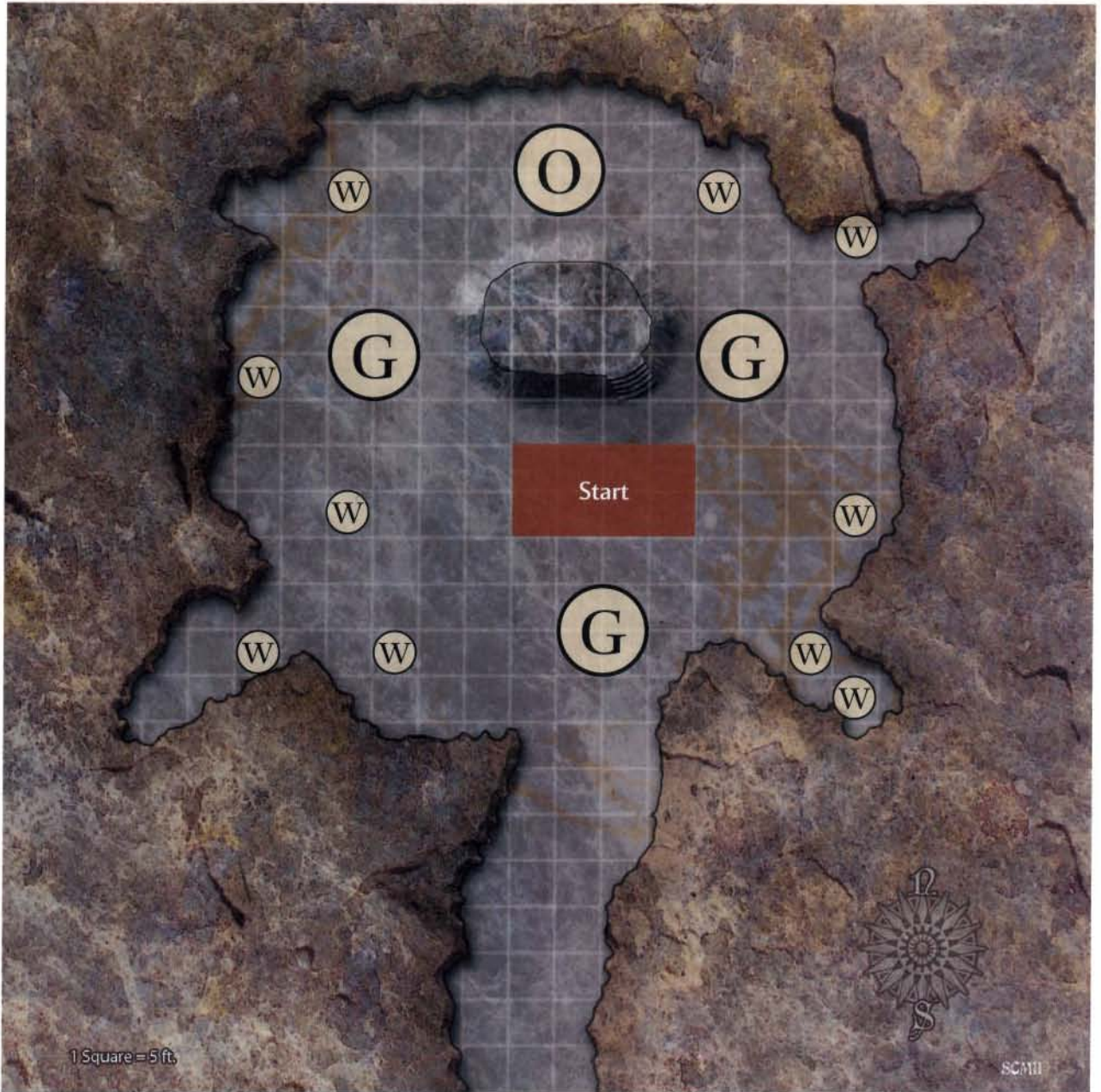
Hit: 11 poison and psychic damage.

Miss: 5 poison and psychic damage.

Str 12 (+6) Dex 18 (+9) Wis 16 (+8)

Con 14 (+7) Int 4 (+2) Cha 8 (+4)

Alignment evil Languages Deep Speech



## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

When the characters emerge from the cave, the Black Arrows erupt in cheers. The warriors lift the heroes over their heads and carry them back to Arak Logan's camp while shouting praises.

Since the characters' departure, the half-elf has gathered what treasure he could find as a reward. Between looting foulspawn corpses and confiscating spoils his men tucked away, he has collected a tidy sum. He presents the characters with an oak chest containing 1,200 gp, 5 perfect moonstones (100 gp each), a stunning aquamarine (500 gp), and one magic item of the party's level + 1d4.


Arak Logan is interested to hear the tale of the adventure. If the adventurers failed to use the *dead words manacle*, Arak Logan thanks them and immediately dispatches warriors to recover Omaranthax's body. Rituals might still allow them to gather intelligence from the corpse. If the characters deliver the *dead words manacle* with the beholder's spirit within it, Arak Logan is overjoyed. If the adventurers also saved Kilna from the cave, Logan is moved almost to tears. (Kilna has lost the stomach for the fight, and he makes plans to retire.)

If the characters completed at least one quest, Logan slices his hand with his dagger and vows by his blood, "From this day forward, the Black Arrows are enemies of your enemies and protectors of your allies. If ever you have a need, the Black Arrows pledge their aid for as long as I shall live."

During an evening of feasting, if you want, Arak tries to recruit the characters to the cause of the Celestian Order. He vouches for them if they wish to join. More information about the order can be found in *Dragon* 375.

### About the Author


As of this writing, **Jobe Bittman** is the reigning King of Monsters at *Kobold Quarterly*. His design work has appeared in publications by Goodman Games and Open Design. You can find more of his ramblings at his blog, [www.metagamemastery.com](http://www.metagamemastery.com), or on Twitter (@metaDM).



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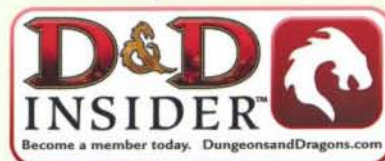
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