



HEROIC

1-10

THE LAST BREATHS OF ASHENPORT

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IT STANDS A LONELY VIGIL atop a remote northern shore, hunkered down against the terrible ocean storms. For most of the year, it sits alone, for trade in the region has decreased. If this were any other town, it would long since have been forgotten, or perhaps even abandoned.

But this is no other village. This is Ashenport. Here, the fish are plentiful. Here, the crops grow and thrive despite the rocky soil. Here, the ocean offers up its riches willingly, like a bashful lover.

And here, now, as the storms roll in and the tide drops to its lowest ebb, the time has come once again for Ashenport to repay that favor. They offer their prayers. They offer their veneration. And they offer the blood and the flesh and the souls of those whom they have lured to their isolated town. For their patron is none other than Father Dagon, Abyssal Prince of the Deep, and in payment for his beneficence, he accepts nothing less.

“The Last Breaths of Ashenport” is an adventure of survival and alien horrors for 8th-level PCs. The adventure is self-contained and can be placed in any setting. “The Last Breaths of Ashenport” is heavily influenced by the writings of H.P. Lovecraft.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ashenport should have died a generation ago, as did the other towns along this rocky coast. When the local priests could offer the townsfolk no hope, they turned to a darker patron, guided by several of their eldest citizens who remembered older, bloodier ways.

Ever since, the people of Ashenport have dwelt, if not in luxury, then at least in comfort. Fishing, hunting, and farming are easy. Sunken treasures appear regularly in shallow waters. A trade route long fallen into obscurity has begun once again to show traces of life.

But the Prince of the Depths gives nothing for free. Every autumn, at the lowest tide, the dark waters beyond Ashenport sing a terrible song. The sea resounds with Dagon's Call, a mystical summons that compels all who hear it—save for Dagon's own worshipers—to march into the sea and allow themselves to drown. The souls of the lost go to feed Dagon's ravenous hunger, while their bodies are infused with his essence, mutating into ichthyic horrors.

That time has come again. Travelers, few though they are, converge on the town, attracted by any number of rumors and announcements. The storms move in, ensuring that those on the road must take shelter at Ashenport, and those already present cannot leave. Nothing now remains but for Dagon's cultists to let the sea claim its due.

Nothing, of course, except the presence of a few strangers for whom the townsfolk are unprepared . . .

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs arrive in the middle of a truly horrific storm. After taking shelter in the local inn, they experience Dagon's Call during their first night. Afterward, the town appears

ALIEN HORRORS AND FAMILIAR FACES

One of the conceits of “The Last Breaths of Ashenport” is that the various creatures the PCs face are truly alien in form. They are fish-men formed from sacrifices to Dagon; slithering horrors from the deepest seas of the Abyss; and ancient creatures the likes of which no living mortal has seen.

Of course, *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* has more than enough strange and twisted monsters to fit the bill, but if you're to truly capture the intended feel of the adventure, it's important to play up the appearance and alien natures of these creatures, rather than to focus on the mechanics. It might sound like a minor point, but the proper use—and, just as important, the careful avoidance—of particular terms can go a long way toward making the PCs, and indeed the players, feel like they're truly facing the unknown.

Along similar lines, the use of some metagame techniques can greatly enhance the feel of horror adventures in general, and of an “alien-horror/Lovecraftian” adventure in particular. The easiest element to change for the session is one of lighting. Don't dim the lights to the point where it's difficult to read the sheet in front of you or anything that drastic; just try not to play in a room that's too brightly lit.

More than that, though, this sort of horror is about unfamiliarity as much as it is more visceral fears. Something as mundane as changing up the setup of the furniture, or the order in which the players sit around the table—minor as they might seem—can add a bit to the sense of strangeness.

And of course, music is a popular choice for setting the mood for many games. Although spooky or creepy music seems a no-brainer for a horror game, again remember that you're looking for “alien” and “uncomfortable” as much as “scary.” Try to pick pieces that are somewhat discordant, perhaps even slightly unpleasant (though not to the point of making it hard to concentrate on the game). I personally have had a great deal of luck with some of the pieces from the soundtrack of *Ravenous*. Although many of the pieces are too obviously steeped in the early years of Americana, some of the others are both spooky and truly disturbing in their use of dissonance.

All this said, of course, remember that no amount of metagame tools are as effective at setting the mood as a DM who's into what he or she is doing. These suggestions are provided to help *enhance* your efforts at atmosphere, but they're minor aids at best; they won't do the job for you.

to have been abandoned overnight, despite the fact that there's no way to leave. Closer inspection reveals a populace huddled in their homes, hiding a terrible secret, while their leaders have vanished to prepare for a great rite.

When the Call sounds again, in a day made night by the overhanging clouds, the sea reaches out for the PCs directly, in the form of Dagon's fish-men.

Eventually, by questioning or following the remaining townsfolk, the PCs discover the shrine of Dagon, concealed beneath Ashenport's church. Within, they have the opportunity to confront the human leader of the cult, but this is not the end of their travails in Ashenport.

Only at the moment of lowest tide, either guided by cultists or warned by fellow travelers, can the party locate the complex of caves at the rocky shore, wherein the inhuman Voice of Dagon dwells. Only by defeating this alien threat, the true architect of the horrors of Ashenport, can the heroes save themselves and end the threat of Dagon's cult.



OUT OF ORDER

The events of “The Last Breaths of Ashenport” are divided up into four periods across two days. This represents the *most likely* order in which the events occur, but the intent is not to “railroad” the players. As you already know if you’ve run the game before, the average party can circumvent the best-laid plans of DMs and game designers in 60 seconds flat. Don’t hesitate to run these events out of order or in a shorter time period than allotted. This requires a bit of on-the-fly alteration, but it shouldn’t prove difficult. Where necessary, we’ve provided additional sidebars of advice, offering guidance on how to alter a scene or encounter based on when the PCs reach it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Obviously, the adventure requires that the PCs find their way to Ashenport at more or less the right time. Presented below are several ways you can accomplish this.

Random Chance: Perhaps the easiest way is to have the PCs on the road that passes through Ashenport when the terrible storms roll in, forcing them to seek shelter.

Trade Fair: As the time for the sacrifice nears, Ashenport sends word to various communities and merchant guilds, inviting a few travelers to a festival where they trade fish, local crafts, and treasures salvaged from the sea in exchange for various goods

difficult to come by so far from civilization. The PCs might choose to attend on their own volition or, more likely, be asked to attend on behalf of an NPC patron.

Investigation: Although the town is isolated and the road lightly traveled, it’s possible that *someone* has noticed the pattern of annual disappearances in the area around Ashenport. The PCs might be here specifically to investigate what’s been happening.

APPROACHING ASHENPORT

As the PCs approach the town, read or paraphrase the following:

Between the heavy clouds and the endless rain, you might as well be blind. In the occasional flash of lightning, however, as the rain is forced aside by a gust of howling wind, you can just barely make out the road ahead. A veritable river of mud twists and winds through a copse of gnarled trees and along a rocky coastline battered by white-capped swells.



And beyond, visible only by the brightest thunderbolts, stands a town. From what you can see, the buildings are old and patched, and the roofs are shingled peaks. Just another village, it seems, but something about it sets your teeth on edge and your skin to crawling. But then, perhaps it is just the cold and the rain . . .

ASHENPORT CONDITIONS

The roads leading to and within Ashenport are so sodden that they've all become mud, reducing movement to one-half speed. Once the first night in Ashenport falls, the weather grows even worse, as Dagon's power works to ensure the sacrifices cannot escape. It continues to rain within Ashenport, and the weather beyond the town grows into a terrible thunderstorm.

After spending at least 24 hours in town, a successful DC 19 Nature check reveals that the weather patterns are not natural.

Rain (within Ashenport): Rain reduces visibility. All creatures more than 1 square distant have concealment (-2 to attack rolls). Perception checks take a -2 penalty. The rain automatically extinguishes any unprotected flames. At the end of every full minute (10 rounds), characters carrying protected flames, such as lanterns, should roll a saving throw. If they fail, those flames are extinguished as well.

Thunderstorms (outside Ashenport): The combined effects of precipitation and wind reduce visibility dramatically. Adjacent creatures have concealment, while creatures more than 1 square distant have total concealment (-5 to attack rolls). Perception checks take a -5 penalty. The storm automatically extinguishes any unprotected flames. At the end of every round, characters carrying protected flames,

such as lanterns, should roll a saving throw. If they fail, those flames are extinguished as well.

Every minute (10 rounds), a lightning bolt strikes the earth in a random location, as a 2-square burst. It attacks at +6 vs. Reflex, and it deals 2d6+2 lightning damage, plus the target is deafened until save.

The severity of the winds impedes movement. Any attempt to move in any direction other than back toward Ashenport is automatically slowed. A PC who experiences this phenomenon gains a +5 bonus to the Nature check to determine that the storm is not natural.

Roughly a mile beyond Ashenport in any direction, the wind and the rains cause the temperature to drop precipitously. The temperature is cold, requiring a DC 22 Endurance check every 8 hours (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 159).

These effects don't come into play during the adventure, but should encourage the PCs not to abandon Ashenport early.

Illumination: Due to the storm, night and day aren't much different. The PCs have to provide their own light sources.

ASHENPORT OVERVIEW

When the PCs arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

Although still rendered gray and miserable by the constant downpour, the town of Ashenport looks better up close than it did from a distance. You can now see that many of the buildings are sturdier than they appeared; a few are even made of quarried stone, rather than wood. Even in the inclement weather, several shops bustle with activity, and

the light that gleams through many a window is bright and cheerful. Sporadic people trudge their way along the muddy roads, shoulders hunched against the rain, going about this business or that.

The salty tang of the sea, and the lingering odor of a hundred years of fishing, insinuate themselves around your mouth and nose. Even the torrential rains and winds cannot completely strip the powerful stench from the air.

Anyone in the area can tell the PCs that the town still plans to hold its trade fair, but that Alderman Ritter has decided to wait for the weather to clear up. The townsfolk are only too happy to point the PCs toward the Smooth Sailing Inn and Tavern (area 1). “Ain’t just the only place in town for a hot meal and a warm bed,” the PCs are told, “but the only place in a dozen leagues. Might meet you there later to hoist a tankard or two; gods know I’ll not be doing much else ‘til the sky stops weepin’.”

In fact, every citizen of Ashenport is a member of Dagon’s cult, and each citizen is automatically hostile to the PCs and other strangers. However, they put on an act of friendliness, trying to keep the strangers off guard until the sea claims them. Unless stated otherwise, assume that a citizen of Ashenport has a Bluff of +14. A successful Insight check is enough to tell a suspicious PC that the people here aren’t as friendly as they’re making themselves out to be, though the check won’t tell the PC *why*.

If it ever becomes important, assume that the average citizen of Ashenport has the combat abilities of either a human minion or a human bandit (*Monster Manual* 162–163), whichever seems appropriate. Where NPCs are expected to engage in combat, their stats are presented in the tactical encounter.

1. THE SMOOTH SAILING INN AND TAVERN

Smooth Sailing is Ashenport’s largest tavern, and the town’s only inn. Any of the townsfolk can direct the party here, and if the PCs want a roof over their heads, this is the only place to find it. The building marked 1A represents the stables, which are located behind the Smooth Sailing but not technically part of the same structure.

Different styles of architecture suggest the building before you was once two or three separate shops, before someone sealed up the spaces between and knocked down the intervening walls. It now forms the largest structure on the block. Smoke rises from several chimneys, only to vanish into the falling rain. Firelight gleams through several windows, and the sound of conversation—nearly inaudible in the storm—leaks from the doorway. A sign above that door, portraying a ship at full sail on a waveless sea, flaps violently in the wind.

The impression of three buildings joined into one continues once the PCs enter.

Three different patterns of wooden floor, at three slightly different levels, make up the common room. Beyond this single quirk, however, this might as well be any other tavern: a bar stands on one side of the vast chamber, a staircase on the other, with a smattering of chairs and tables scattered throughout the area. Two fireplaces radiate a comforting warmth throughout the room, and several serving staff whirl about with tankards of ale and plates of smoked fish.

The PCs can buy basic drinks and foodstuffs here for 110% of the prices in the *Player’s Handbook*.

The Smooth Sailing is bustling, at least in a relative sense, with activity, and contains several people with whom the PCs might interact.

Pioter: Pioter, a male human, is the owner and proprietor of the Smooth Sailing Inn and Tavern. He’s a sour-looking fellow, with gaunt, unshaven cheeks and salt-and-pepper hair. Unlike his serving staff, he makes no effort to appear friendly, instead standing gruffly behind the bar and directing any efforts at conversation toward one of his staff.

Sannuel, Relina, and Manelda: The human staff of the Smooth Sailing is far friendlier than their boss, or at least they act that way. They’re quick to respond to orders and happy to answer questions about the history of the town—minus any reference to Dagon, of course. Sannuel is a dashing rake of a man, and Relina fits the stereotypical image of the buxom blonde barmaid to a T. Manelda is somewhat older, and she gives the impression of having seen it all before.

Guests: Currently, the Smooth Sailing is playing host to around two dozen guests (plus the PCs), and is full nearly to capacity. These guests include the following:

- ◆ Terza is an emissary for the Goldleaf Trading Consortium in the city of Four Winds. Terza is a dark-haired, graceful half-elf. She’d be a perfect beauty if her left eye wasn’t an ugly white, obscured by a cataract. She boasts a tattoo of a gold leaf on her left shoulder. The Goldleaf Consortium has no interest in trading for Ashenport’s fish or lumber, but they are interested in an exclusive deal to sell the treasures scrounged from the sea.

- ◆ 6 Goldleaf guards (*male and female human guards; Monster Manual* 162) have gold leaf tattoos.

- ◆ Matthias Creel is an emissary from Surrens, Creel, and Blackwell, based in the Free City of Greyhawk.

This male human seeks the same goal as Terza, and any interaction between them is coldly polite at best.

◆ 8 Surrens, Creel, and Blackwell guards (*male and female human guards; Monster Manual 162*).

◆ Jandal Phen is a jeweler and sculptor who hopes to sell his services to the folks of Ashenport to restore, reshape, and create duplicates of their various treasures. This male human is friendly, but somewhat intimidated by his fellow guests, and he is worried that their presence can make his own efforts harder.

◆ 2 hired bodyguards (*male human guards; Monster Manual 162*).

2. THE BOUNTIFUL TIDE GENERAL STORE

If the PCs need to acquire supplies or tools while in Ashenport, the Bountiful Tide is the place to go.

There's little to differentiate this building from the other surrounding shops, save that the walls are meticulously whitewashed (or at least they were meticulous before the heavy rains). Above the door hangs a painting of a beautiful shoreline, with the words "A Bountiful Tide" etched above it in gold paint.

Inside the shop are numerous aisles, with goods divided (very roughly) into categories. For instance, ropes and pitons can be found in the aisle marked "exploring," while rations and salt can be found in "foodstuffs." Everything here costs 110% of the prices in the *Player's Handbook*. The shop sells no weapons or armor.

Lena: Lena is an old human woman, with iron-gray hair and a pronounced limp. She approaches customers with a huge smile, constantly calling them "dear" and "sweetie" and similar terms. If you like, you can build a brief Diplomacy-based skill challenge around

her; if the PCs are successful, she'll drop her prices to match those in the *Player's Handbook*.

3. BLACKSMITH

If the PCs intended to commission any work from the town blacksmith, they're out of luck.

The anvil, the wall of hammers and tongs, and the heavy furnace clearly mark this shop as that of a blacksmith. You see nobody inside, however, nor any tools or weapons hanging on racks for sale.

In point of fact, Ashenport's blacksmith has spent several weeks in preparation for this time of year, ensuring that the cultists have weapons for dealing with anyone who proves resistant to Dagon's Call. When the PCs arrive, he is out among the populace, delivering weapons to those equipped to use them. He has no intention of returning to work until after the low tide.

4. ASH GROVE

Here, in the center of town, a densely thick copse of trees grows, and all of the trees are drooping and weeping in the heavy rains. A full 75 feet across, the grove is far too healthy and far too well tended to be mere chance. Clearly, this grove is something the people of Ashenport take very seriously.

Indeed, if the PCs ask any of the natives about the grove, they learn that it has stood as long as Ashenport. The trees nearly died a while back, but since then have recovered and thrive as fully as Ashenport does.

Any PCs who decides to push through to the rough center of the grove can make a DC 14 Search check. If they succeed, they discover a small sculpture of

Melora, now overgrown and defaced with edged weapons.

Any native of Ashenport who can be made at least friendly acknowledges the presence of the sculpture, but claims, "It has nearly been forgotten. I think the damage was done a generation or more back, when the town was suffering and the people needed to vent their frustrations."

The damage was done as part of the town's shift to the worship of Dagon, of course, but nobody's going to admit that.

The PCs' first combat in Ashenport occurs here, on the morning after Dagon's first Call. See Part Two: Confusion.

5. THE TOWN HALL

This is the center of government—such as it is—in Ashenport.

This large stone building, one of the tallest in Ashenport, can only be the seat of government. Most of its windows are dark, but lantern light shines through a few, forming peeping eyes in the building's façade and suggests that business continues even in this weather.

Although large for Ashenport, this isn't the monolithic governing body that might be found in larger communities. It boasts three stories and several dozen offices, but most are either unused or are occupied by simple clerks recording information such as the day's catch as reported by the town's fisherfolk.

If the PCs can talk their way past the clerks to see either the alderman or the sheriff on the first evening, they find Ritter polite but distant, and Kaern rude and belligerent. Both request that, unless the PCs have a sort of emergency, they wait a few days for the rains to cease and the trade fair to start before

speaking with the town's officials. If the PCs insist on speaking to Ritter about past disappearances, his voice grows quiet, and he whispers, "Yes, we've had problems in our town, but I cannot speak about them here and now. I'll send someone to fetch you tomorrow, and we'll speak more openly." This is a ruse to get the PCs out; Ritter assumes they won't be any problem after they hear Dagon's Call. A DC 19 Insight check reveals that he's not being entirely truthful, but he'll say no more here and now.

Alderman Ritter (see Encounter S5): Ritter is Ashenport's alderman (essentially the mayor). He is a jovial-seeming man, slightly overweight, with immaculately coifed blond hair.

Sheriff Kaern (male human guard; Monster Manual 162): Kaern is the perfect stereotype of the power-hungry small-town sheriff. He's a bully who enjoys throwing his weight around and trying to intimidate outsiders. He stands nearly six-and-a-half feet tall, and his bristly brown hair and beard make him look bearlike.

Clerks (male and female humans).

6. HOLDING CELLS

There's not much crime in Ashenport, particularly since the entire town converted to a single faith, but these cells remain from the days where life was not so peaceful.

This squat building is made of a dull, filthy stone. Only a single heavy door provides ingress, and all the windows boast rusty iron bars. Although it has largely faded, blurred by many years and the overpowering scents of ocean, rain, and fish, the tang of human misery still clings to the small structure.

This building is nothing more than a single open "office," behind which runs a hall with half a dozen cells. One guard is on duty here at all times, increased to four when any of the cells are occupied.

1 or 4 prison guards (male and female human guards; Monster Manual 162).

There's little chance the PCs bother with this area, but if they happen to discover it any time after the first dawn, they find it abandoned, and the keys are still in the desk. If they choose to use it as such, it makes a good place to leave any enemies they take alive.

7. THE DOCKS

In better weather, this is the heart and soul of Ashenport's economy.

In the white-capped waves whipped up by the stormy winds, it's almost impossible to make out the sequence of small wooden jetties. Over half a dozen of them stretch out along the coast. Several small fishing boats are tied tightly to them, rising and rocking with the waves like drunken winos, threatening to tip completely over.

Other than the occasional fisherman running out to double-check the status of his boat, the docks remain empty.

The coastline slopes upward toward the north, becoming a low cliff-face rather than a beachfront by the time it reaches area 12.

8. TANNERY

As might be imagined, this is where Ashenport's citizens bring hides and skins to be tanned and worked into leather goods.

Even in the heavy rains and winds, the stench of tanning chemicals and dyes lingers heavy on the air, causing stomachs to turn and eyes to water.

As with many other shops, the tannery is shut down for the duration of the storm (and the sacrifice). However, once the PCs determine the nature of the shop, allow a DC 19 Nature check. Those who succeed realize that, when it's not storming and the winds are weaker, the stench of the tannery encompasses the Smooth Sailing Inn and Tavern. That makes the positioning of the inn a poor business choice, since it would drive business away during other times of the year.

The truth is that when they're not busy sacrificing passersby to Dagon, the folk of Ashenport don't want strangers lingering about.

9. THE MILL

Although the grain mill is shut down due to the weather, it's not entirely abandoned.

This old wooden building contains little more than a heavy and ponderous grindstone and other milling equipment. Although you cannot initially see what power turns the stone, you can eventually hear the running of a small underground stream, barely audible over the rain.

Not all the cultists of Dagon are as patient as others. A small band has gathered together, prepared to take direct action against anyone who escapes the first Call. This group consists of two thuggish cultists and two mystic cultists. These NPCs attack the PCs on day two (see Part Two: Confusion, and Encounter AA: Ambush in Ashenport).

When the PCs arrive in town, the four cultists are holed up here, discussing strategy and preparing weapons. If the PCs explore the mill this early, the

cultists scatter, but if the PCs prove hostile or unwilling to let them leave, they attack. If this happens, run Encounter AA, but place the combat in a large room with an obstacle (grindstone) in the middle, rather than around Ash Grove.

If the PCs explore the mill any time after the first dawn, it's empty except for a few sleeping bags and bits of refuse.

10. HOME OF ALDERMAN RITTER

The finest house in all Ashenport is, unsurprisingly, inhabited by its highest citizen.

A structure nearly as tall as the town hall, though not nearly so broad, boasts several peaked roofs and a number of gleaming windows. The entire property is surrounded by a wrought-iron fence.

Alderman Ritter lives here, along with his wife, a butler, and several full-time guards.

Alderman Ritter (see Encounter S5): See area 5: The Town Hall.

The Lady Ritter (female human mage; *Monster Manual* 163): Lady Ritter is a middle-aged woman with golden blonde hair. She is a perfect hostess, but prefers to let her husband do the talking.

Ronguel: Ronguel is the Ritter family butler, and this male human has performed these duties since before the current head of household was born.

4 Household guards (male and female human guards; *Monster Manual* 162).

11. GLEAMING DAWN CHURCH

The ancestral center of worship for Ashenport is still serving the community, but its focus has changed dramatically. The building marked 11A is the home of the church's official high priest—currently Mother

Sharallan—while 11B is the Ashenport cemetery. A DC 19 Perception check reveals that the cemetery hasn't been used in many years. This is because all of Ashenport's dead are now given to the sea, and thus to Dagon.

Atop a high, rocky hill on the northwest side of town stands what is obviously a church. Constructed of heavy wood, it appears to have once been coated in a bright whitewash that has since largely peeled away. The great holy symbol atop the short steeple seems almost to be bleeding as it sheds the rain.

The hill is steep, requiring a DC 10 Athletics check to traverse. The stairs carved into the stone, of course, make this easier.

The interior of the church is typical.

You find yourselves within a long chamber, its vaulted ceilings making it appear far more cavernous than it truly is. On the far end, a raised dais boasts a heavy altar, draped in cloth embroidered with a smattering of holy icons, and supporting several chalices, incense burners, and candelabras. Rows of wooden pews, made rough and rickety by years of use, face the altar. Several stained glass windows—probably worth more than the rest of the building combined—sit high in the walls. The occasional flash of lightning sends multihued patterns dancing and wriggling obscenely across the floor.

The symbols on the cloth include the signs of Pelor and Melora.

A DC 14 Religion check suggests that something is just a bit off. All the proper trappings, tools, and symbols are present, but they don't appear to have been used recently.

One of the pews in the right rear of the church is counterbalanced to swing up, revealing a staircase

leading down into the shrine (see Part Three: Veneration). It normally requires a DC 19 Perception check to find this hidden passage.

Mother Sharallan (see Encounter S5): Sharallan is a tall woman, so gaunt as to appear starving. She has thinning brown hair and a perpetual frown. She views everyone, friend and stranger, as a nuisance to be tolerated, but her voice is kinder than her expression.

If the PCs visit the church on their first evening in town, Sharallan appears. Her initial reaction is to ask them to leave, since she's preparing for an important rite "beseeching the gods' grace on our town and the coming gathering." She's willing to let them stay to pray if they want, but she insists on keeping an eye on them. If the PCs ask why the religious paraphernalia

FLEEING ASHENPORT

As written, the hazards and difficulties of the storm should be enough to keep everyone around—including the PCs—until the adventure is concluded, one way or the other. (And one would also hope that most players would prefer to have their characters get to the bottom of things, since running away from adventure doesn't make for an interesting session of D&D.)

Nevertheless, some players might be determined to make every effort to escape the town, despite the storm. This might be pure selfishness, or they might be convinced by an NPC (likely Matthias) that it's worth the risk. If so, and if you don't mind being somewhat heavy-handed as a DM, feel free to have them encounter *things* in the wild, creatures of Dagon at least as deadly as those they must face in Ashenport. One encounter (Out in the Wild, on page 105) is provided for just this purpose.

seems ill-used, she claims that few of Ashenport's citizens have been to church lately, due to the weather and preparations for the trade fair. A DC 19 Insight check reveals the falsehood, but if she is accused of lying, she insists the PCs leave immediately. If they refuse, she calls for her helpers (see Encounter S5, replacing Ritter with another mystic cultist). Run the S5 fight here, but replace that map with a room filled with pews and a raised dais on one side. The PCs might find it odd (if they battle Sharallan on the first night) that nobody attempts to arrest them. This is because the cultists still hope the Call takes them.

After the first dawn, the church seems abandoned until the events of Part Three: Veneration.

12. THE COASTAL CAVES

Until the lowest tide, this is a short (roughly 25-foot) cliff-face down to the ocean. See Part Four: Confrontation for what happens when the caves are exposed.

PART ONE: ARRIVAL

(Afternoon through Late Night)

The storm is pounding and the roads have turned to mud. With the possible exception of a stray towns-person, nobody braves the elements to greet the PCs. Although they might explore the town a bit, they probably wind up at the Smooth Sailing Inn and Tavern eventually.

Once there, the staff greets them jovially enough, and the PCs can spend a few moments in conversation with Terza, Matthias, Jandal, and the others. Although the weather is miserable, nothing *obviously* untoward occurs until after midnight.

DAGON'S CALL, FIRST NIGHT

Roughly 2 hours before dawn, regardless of whether the PCs are awake or asleep, read or paraphrase the following.

Slowly, gradually, a new sound penetrates the pounding of the rain and the howling of the winds. Barely audible at first, it resolves itself into an alien, high-pitched keening. It resounds with loss, with sadness—the lament of a mother who has lost her children or of the sailor stranded far from home. It echoes from over the waves and grows ever louder until the storm has receded into the background. It fills your ears, insinuates itself through your mind and your soul, until you can think and dream of almost nothing else.

It is not beautiful. It is not comforting. And yet you find yourself overcome with an irresistible urge to follow.

At this point, the horrific sound—the Call of Dagon—makes an attack roll, with a +7 modifier, against the Will defense of everyone in Ashenport who is not a worshiper of Dagon. (This is a charm attack.) Those who are hit are compelled to move toward the sea immediately by the most direct route. They move at a standard walking pace, but do not deviate, and they can overcome obstacles in their way (such as doors). They do not fight to defend themselves, but attempt to move around any foes to reach the ocean. Once there, they walk into the thrashing tide and allow themselves to drown. (Assume that, between rising from their bed, leaving their rooms, and finding their way through the streets at a steady pace, it takes 1d4+4 minutes for any given individual to travel from the Smooth Sailing to a watery death.)

Anyone who takes damage is entitled to an immediate saving throw to resist Dagon's Call and defend themselves. The Call ends 10 minutes after it begins, fading as gradually as it appeared. Once someone



successfully saves, she is immune to that Call, but not future ones.

Obviously, you roll the attack against each of the PCs, but what of the NPCs? You can roll all nineteen attacks, but this can be time-consuming. If you'd rather go with a more narrative-based approach, assume that, on this first night, half of the warriors

SKILL CHALLENGE: QUESTIONING TOWNSFOLK

Use these guidelines when the PCs attempt to gain information from any of Ashenport's unnamed citizens.

Setup: The PCs must interrogate one of Ashenport's Dagon-worshiping citizens.

Level: 8.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Intimidate

Bluff (DC 14): The PCs attempt to trick or mislead the cultists, perhaps trying to convince them that the PCs already know more than they do. The PCs can do this for a maximum of two victories.

Intimidate (DC 14): The PCs can threaten or coerce the villagers—who, despite their horrid faith, are still mostly normal folk—into cooperation. The PCs can do this for a maximum of four victories with this skill.

Diplomacy: The villagers are too fanatical to negotiate. A Diplomacy attempt fails automatically.

Insight (DC 14): The PCs recognize that the cultists are nervous and can play upon those fears. On a failure, the PCs take a -2 penalty to their next Bluff or Intimidate checks. On a success, the PCs gain a +2 bonus to their next Bluff or Intimidate checks. This skill can be attempted only twice, or only once if the first attempt fails.

Religion (DC 19): The PCs can point out prior

tales and incidents when those who turned against their gods—such as the people who have turned against Pelor and Melora—suffered greatly, even when they appeared to be blessed. A success scores one victory and grants a +2 bonus to the next Bluff or Intimidate check. This skill can be attempted only once.

Success: The PCs learn everything under Failures, below, plus the individual admits that the rite is dedicated to none other than Father Dagon. He or she also admits that the actual ceremony is in a hidden shrine *under* the church.

Failure: The PCs have varying results based on how many successes they achieve.

One success or fewer: The locals refuse outright to speak to the PCs. The party learns nothing.

Two successes: The locals admit that their leaders have likely gone to prepare for a religious rite that the townsfolk practice once a year. They claim that this rite is meant to protect them from the call of the sea.

Three successes: As two victories, plus the local also admits that a gathering is planned at the church this coming evening as part of the rite.

In addition, some of the locations below detail further information the PCs might gain with a certain number of successes.

If you like, you can have several of the citizens fight rather than cooperate (as zealots are wont to do).

succumb to Dagon's Call, but that Matthias, Terza, and Jandal successfully save.

Precisely what happens next depends on the actions of the PCs. Thankfully, the Call wakes even those who successfully save, so they are in a position to stop others from drowning themselves. Presumably, the PCs first focus on saving any of their fellow party members who succumbed, but they're (hopefully) decent enough to also stop some of the guards, even though it's unlikely they can save all of them. PCs have several options for stopping those intent on drowning themselves, from holding them in place (by grabs or spells that cause immobilization or restraint), to incapacitating them (by knocking them out in combat or with spells such as *sleep*), to hitting them until they snap out of it. Terza and Jandal, and those guards who did not succumb, take similar steps to save their own companions, but Matthias remains hidden in his room.

If you don't wish to roll the fate of each and every guard who has succumbed to the Call, assume that half of those who succumbed, and whom the PCs did not themselves save, succeed in drowning themselves, while the others are stopped.

Once the Call ceases, the surviving visitors to Ashenport are in a panic and might turn to the PCs for guidance.

Troubleshooting: Although unlikely, it's just possible that *all* the PCs fail their saving throws. If this happens, Terza or one of her guards attempts to stop them from leaving the inn, hopefully snapping one or more of them out of it in time to save the others.

Ad Hoc Experience: For each NPC the PCs actively save from drowning, award the party a minor quest reward of 100 XP.

OUT OF ORDER: YOU'RE GOING WHERE?

So what happens if the PCs *don't* go back to the inn right after Dagon's second Call? It's assumed that they do, if only to return any of the NPCs they've saved, but they could have other ideas.

If so, you have two options. One, move Pioter's clumsy break-in to later in the day, when the PCs are present. This is the simplest solution, but it might strain credibility a bit. After all, if he was going to break in, why wouldn't he do it when everyone else was distracted by the Call?

Two, you can have the PCs discover some of the NPCs acting unusual, and let them determine (by magic or skills such as Heal) that they're drugged. Once this is done, they can track the poisoner from the back door of the tavern to Pioter's house. (The rains are heavy and the day overcast, but the tracks are still relatively fresh, and the mud soft, so the DC is only 18, +1 for every additional hour that has passed.)

And if worse comes to worst: So the PCs don't have a chance to question Pioter. They have plenty of other opportunities to learn what they need to know.

PART TWO: CONFUSION

(Pre-Dawn through Afternoon)

As the sun rises on day two, read or paraphrase the following.

Behind the constant rains and stone-thick clouds, the lightning of the sky is all but imperceptible. Still, dawn has come, and Ashenport should be rising as well.

It is not. Even as the first few moments of morning creep past, the town remains utterly still. No doors slam, no shopkeepers huddle against the rain as they rush to start the new day's business. Other than yourselves and your fellow outsiders, not a soul stirs. The only signs of life are a few large gulls, undaunted by the rains, that perch among the town's roofs, like flies converging on a bloating corpse.

Despite the fact that there should be no way of leaving, due to the storm, the town appears empty. Nobody walks the streets, none of the tavern staff are present, and nobody answers the doors at town hall.

The other guests of the Smooth Sailing are only too happy to tell the PCs exactly what they experienced. They're frightened and are looking for anyone and everything to protect them. Terza offers the PCs 500 gp if they can ensure her safety and that of her people, plus find out what's going on. Jandal throws in 300 gp of his own. Matthias insists that the PCs protect him as well, but offers no coin.

A CLOSER LOOK

If the PCs spend at least an hour searching the town, compare their passive Perception to DC 14. Those who succeed realize that Ashenport is not so abandoned as it appears. Although the official structures and shops are indeed empty, most of the private homes show traces of life: a brief flicker of candlelight behind a waving curtain, moving shadows through the slats in the shutters, that sort of thing.

If the PCs confront any of these folks, the citizens claim that the strange sound of the previous night has happened before, and they are hiding themselves away until they're sure it's safe. A successful DC 8 Insight check reveals that the speaker is being deceptive. If the PCs can intimidate them successfully, or magically compel them to cooperate, they can gain further information.

AMBUSH AT THE GROVE

The first time the PCs pass near Ash Grove (area 4) on this first morning, they are attacked by a small cadre of fanatical cultists too impatient to wait and see if the strangers succumb to the next Call.

Tactical Encounter: Ambush in Ashenport (page 90).

The PCs might question the cultists (or, using magic, their bodies). If they can be compelled into cooperating, the cultists can provide the same information as the citizens, presented above. In addition, with 3 or 4 victories, they admit that they sought to kill the PCs because they not only withstood Dagon's Call, but also (presumably) stopped others from sacrificing themselves.

DAGON'S CALL, FIRST DAY

Dagon's Call sounds again roughly 2 hours after a noon that remains as dark as night. The Call has the same mechanics, and the same results, as the first night.

If you again do not wish to roll attacks against each of the NPCs in the Smooth Sailing, assume that half the remaining guards, and *one* of the others—either Terza, Matthias, or Jandal—succumbs.

This time, however, Dagon's followers aren't content to leave things to chance. The PCs are making a nuisance of themselves. Even as the Call sounds and the PCs go about trying to save any of their companions (or anyone else) who succumbed, the sea reaches out for them in the form of several truly horrific, shambling creatures.

Tactical Encounter: The Sea's Long Reach (page 91).

Most of the NPCs retreat in fear, but if you'd like, you can have Terza's and Matthias's guards participate in the battle. Just add in another few fish-men to make up for it.

WHO'S THAT CREEPING 'ROUND MY DOOR?

If and when the PCs return to the Smooth Sailing after Dagon's second Call, compare their passive Perception checks to a DC 19 (but remember to account for the penalties due to the rain). Those who succeed notice that the rear door to the tavern is open, or hear activity in the kitchen. Although this *could* be any of the guests rooting around for a snack, that seems unlikely immediately after Dagon's Call. Those who make the check also recognize that someone is trying to be stealthy.

If the PCs enter the kitchen, they find Pioter dosing the food and drink with a foul, ichorlike liquid. Pioter flees if possible, but if cornered or captured, drops to his knees and begs for his life.

From Pioter, the PCs can gain the same information as provided by the townsfolk, above. In addition, with at least three victories, Pioter admits that he was trying to drug the food to make the outsiders more susceptible to Dagon's Call. Because he runs the inn, the rest of the cult sees the guests as his responsibility, and he's frightened by the fact that so many have resisted the Call. In addition, Pioter identifies both Alderman Ritter and Mother Sharallan as high-ranking members of the cult.

The drug is a unique poison that works only by ingestion. It makes a +7 attack against Will defense, and if it hits, it bestows a -2 penalty to Will defense for 1 hour. It goes bad within 6 hours if not used.

PART THREE: VENERATION

(Late Afternoon through Pre-Dawn)

The PCs have had several opportunities to learn of the gathering to be held that evening in the Gleaming Dawn Church. If the PCs have failed to discover this, however, when the evening comes you should compare their passive Perception score to a DC 19, as long as they are outside. Success indicates that, through the downpour, they spot a small group of people converging from various streets at the base of the hill and mounting the steps toward the church.

And should even that fail, have Terza or one of the guards tell the PCs that they've seen people converging on the church. If you have to do this, though, it means the PCs have missed every opportunity to discover the importance of the church on their own. (What have they been *doing*, anyway?)

If the PCs figure out for themselves that they need to go to the church, rather than having Terza or one of her guards point the way, grant them 200 XP as a minor quest reward.

Oddly enough, once the PCs brave the wind and the slick steps up the hillside (feel free to call for a few DC 10 Acrobatics checks if like), they find the church empty. The candelabra on the altar is burning, so someone *was* here, but where are they now?

OUT OF ORDER: AN EARLY ARRIVAL

Don't panic if the PCs find the hidden trapdoor earlier than they're supposed to. You can still run the shrine almost entirely as written. Ignore any references to groups of worshipers (they haven't arrived yet). You might also consider locating Althanis and his fish-men attendants (see areas S9 and S10) in the high priest's quarters (area S7) instead. You can still run the combat mostly as presented just by altering the environmental hazards.

As described in the area description for 11: The Gleaming Dawn Church, a secret door beneath a pivoting pew provides access to the underground shrine. This normally requires a DC 21 Perception check to find, but grant the PCs the following circumstance modifiers. (Unlike most circumstance modifiers, these stack.)

◆ If the PCs already know the secret door exists, perhaps from interrogating townsfolk, they gain a +2 on their check.

◆ If the PCs followed someone here, the pew hasn't clicked back into position yet. They gain another +2 on their check.

When the pew slides aside, it reveals a spiral staircase leading down to area S1.

DAGON'S HIDDEN SHRINE

The hidden shrine to Dagon is small, but dangerous. The following features are common throughout the shrine *unless stated otherwise*.

Ceilings: Between 8 and 10 feet high. Ceilings, walls, and floors are worked stone.

Door, Strong Wooden: 2 inches thick; AC 5, Fortitude 10, Reflex 5; hp 20; break DC 16. Doors are *unlocked* unless noted otherwise; those that are locked require a DC 20 Thievery check.

Door, Secret (Stone): 2 inches thick; AC 5, Fortitude 10, Reflex 5; hp 40; break DC 25; Perception DC 19 to locate. All secret doors require a DC 20 Thievery check to open.

Illumination: Characters (and worshipers) must provide their own illumination.

S1. THE ENTRY HALL

The stairs creak and shift beneath your feet, almost as though they were grunting in pain. The chamber into which the stairs descend is rounded on one side. Two doors provide egress to your right and left. Ahead of you, a large double door stands between two smaller ones.

All the walls are etched with images of horrific creatures of the deep, from mighty serpents to great krakens. Their eyes glare at you in hatred.

The door to area 3 is locked (from this side, not from the other); the others are not. The two rooms labeled 1A are cloakrooms, where worshipers don ceremonial garb. Unfortunately, though several remain, these simple cloaks fail to cover either the face or much of the body, and thus they are useless as disguises.

As soon as anyone opens any of the doors leading from the room (perhaps before you've even read the above description), the fish-men attack.

Tactical Encounter: Beyond the Door (page 93).

If a fish-man successfully flees to area 5, the door at the base of the stairs is locked. Otherwise it is not.

S2. BEDROOM

This chamber is empty but for a pair of unmade bunks, each with a small footlocker beneath it. The sheets are yellowed from long use, and acrid with the sweat of sleeping men with evil dreams.

When preparing for rites, some of the cult's adepts sleep here, rather than returning to their homes each night. The footlockers hold only changes of clothes. The room off to the right is a closet full of blankets, pillows, spare cloaks, and a shelf with various unholy treatises on Dagon, worth about 50 gp to a collector or religious scholar.

Tactical Encounter: Beyond the Door (page 93).

SKILL CHALLENGE: QUESTIONING CULTISTS

Use these guidelines when the PCs attempt to gain information from any of the cultists beneath the church. If questioning either Sharallan or Althanis personally, increase all DCs by 1.

Setup: The PCs must interrogate one of Dagon's cultists.

Level: 8.

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Intimidate

Bluff (DC 14): The PCs attempt to trick or mislead the cultists, perhaps trying to convince them that they already know more than they do. The PCs can do this for a maximum of two victories.

Intimidate (DC 14): The PCs can threaten or coerce the cultists into cooperation. The PCs can do this for a maximum of four victories with this skill. If the PCs have defeated Sharallan already, the PCs gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks. If the PCs have defeated Althanis, the PCs gain a +2 circumstance bonus.

Diplomacy: The cultists are too fanatical to negotiate. A Diplomacy attempt fails automatically.

Insight (DC 14): The PCs recognize that the cultists are nervous about the fact that the PCs

have infiltrated the shrine and can play upon those fears. On a failure, the PCs take a -2 penalty to their next Bluff or Intimidate checks. On a success, the PCs gain a +2 bonus to their next Bluff or Intimidate checks. This skill can be attempted only twice, or only once if the first attempt fails.

Religion: Unlike the villagers above, the cultists below are too fanatical to accept any questioning of their faith. A Religion check attempting to do so does not qualify as a failure, but neither can it offer any successes; it isn't accurate.

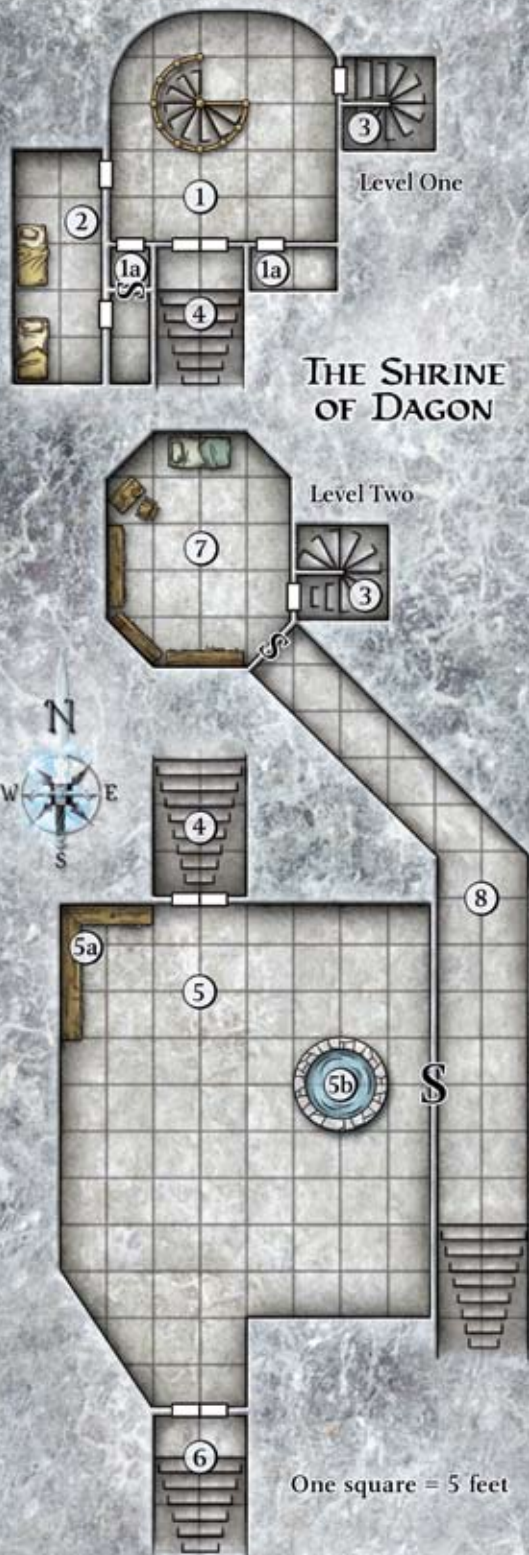
Success: The PCs learn everything under Failures, below, plus the PCs learn of the hidden caves (area 12), and that they're only accessible for a few hours around the year's lowest tides.

Failure: The PCs have varying results based on how many successes they achieve.

One success or fewer: The cultists refuse to divulge anything to the PCs.

Two successes: The PCs learn anything from the cultists that they could have learned with four successes against the townsfolk. (See the prior Skill Challenge sidebar on page 79.)

Three successes: The PCs learn that *the entire town* belongs to Dagon. Every single citizen is a member of the cult.



S3. THE SPIRAL STAIR

Whereas the stair from the church was iron, this spiral was carved from the living rock. It leads down into the depths, to the gods know where, and your footsteps echo into infinity.

The door leading to area 7 is locked.

Tactical Encounter: Beyond the Door (page 93).

S4. DOWNWARD

If the PCs listen at the door, those who succeed on a DC 19 Perception check recognize that someone or something lurks beyond. Otherwise, they are surprised when the encounter begins.

The great double door creaks open, revealing a long straight stair.

If the PCs have at least 9 squares of illumination, add the following.

You think you can just make out another double door, almost identical to the one you've just opened, at the base of the stair.

As soon as one door is fully open (perhaps before you've even read the above description), the fish-men attack.

Tactical Encounter: Beyond the Door (page 93).

S5. THE POOL

You can see only half of the chamber, due to a heavy black curtain that hangs across the room, waving slightly despite the lack of any breeze. To your right, a pair of bookcases creaks beneath the weight of ancient tomes of cracked leather and yellowing pages.

Once the PCs can see the other half of the room, read or paraphrase the following.

The chamber's hidden half is a nearly perfect square, with a large stone pool precisely in the center. The rim of the font is carved with repeating images of sea serpents devouring whole ships, and the water—despite the fact that it cannot be but a few feet deep—is an impenetrable black.

The water in the pool is normal (albeit somewhat stagnant and stale). It appears black because the inside of the pool is painted in that color.

The two cultists attack immediately, since they do not recognize the PCs as fellow worshipers.

Tactical Encounter: The Pool (page 94).

If the PCs have met Alderman Ritter before, they recognize him during or after the battle. This doubtless goes a long way to prove that the cult of Dagon is prevalent throughout Ashenport.

The PCs might wish to question any survivors; see the following sidebar.

Treasure: Although the books are mildly informative, particularly on the topic of demons, the entire collection is, despite its age, worth only about 100 gp. Shoved between two of the books is a divine scroll containing the rituals *commune with nature*, *Leomund's secret chest*, and *wizard's sight*.

S6. EVEN FARTHER DOWNWARD

These stairs are identical to S4, but without the lurking fish-men.

S7. THE ABODE OF EVIL

Something is subtly off-putting about this chamber. Perhaps it is the contents: a bed, a writing desk, and a trio of bookcases. The books smell uncomfortably of mold and old parchment, the sheets of the bed are stained with a yellow-gray slick of slime, and the chair by the desk has the mark of claws or spines in the armrests.

Perhaps it is the shape of the room: octagonal, yet



somehow uneven, as though it was carved without care or measurement.

And perhaps it is none of these things, but instead it is the faint aura of depravity that clings to the chamber like a morning mist.

These are the living quarters of Althanis, high priest of Dagon's cult in Ashenport, servant of the Voice of Dagon (see area C6).

Unless the PCs have breached the shrine earlier than anticipated and you've decided that Althanis is

here rather than at the altar, no encounter takes place in this room.

Treasure: A DC 8 Religion check reveals that several of the old books on the bookcases are truly ancient treatises on demons and demonology. These include *Daemons and Their ilk* by Ardan Fein, Balquist's *Abyssal Numerology and Symbolism as Applied to Mortal Conjurations*, and even an abridged translation of Iggwilv's *Demonomicon*. These three books are worth roughly 150 gp each in the right market.

S8. BEHIND THE WALLS

The corridor stretches before you, leading to yet another staircase. Footsteps, speech, and even breathing echoes strangely in this passage, returning to you twisted and distorted.

Perhaps the warping of the echoes is due to the intricate carvings? Walls, ceiling, and floor are covered with more images of marine creatures. Immense claws snap humans in half, while tentacles the size of redwoods wrap themselves about shattered galleons. Winding through the center of it all, along the floor, is a series of impossibly long serpents, with heads on both ends, each biting the throat of the next. So real are the images, you can practically smell the salty tang of the sea.

From this side, the secret doors are not hidden and require no roll to find, but they still require the relevant rolls to open.

This hidden passage is both a means for the high priest to access the altar from his own chambers, and an escape route for the faithful should something go wrong. (In fact, depending on when the PCs discover this passage, it might currently be used for just that purpose. See area S9.)

At a point along the hall (shaded on the map), the passage is trapped. The worshipers all know how to

avoid the trap by paying close attention to the carvings on the floor.

Tactical Encounter: The Hidden Hall (page 96).

Everyone in the marked square, and in both adjacent squares, is targeted by the trap. The various sea creatures on the walls appear to suddenly flick their tongues at the PCs; it is these that form the blades of the trap.

In addition to the effects above, the trap causes an immensely loud bell to sound, warning that someone is in the hidden passage.

S9. THE INNER SANCTUARY

You have entered a perfectly square chamber, which is empty except for several rows of kneeling cloths on which are embroidered huge, gaping, ichthyic maws. The ceiling rises nearly 30 feet above you. On the opposite side of the room, a narrow stair leads to a higher platform. You cannot see much of what's up there, except for two statues that appear to represent masses of intertwined tentacles and eel-like visages, and a huge altar of black stone from which rises a sculpted serpent, glaring toward the left. You think, but cannot be certain, that someone might be moving about behind that altar.

Two similar statues stand in front of the platform, on your own level.

The description assumes that Althanis has evacuated the worshipers through the secret door into area 8. The sounds of combat in area 5 (and possibly a fish-man fleeing from area 4) have alerted Althanis to the presence of intruders. If, however, the PCs did not allow the fish-man in area 4 to escape, they might catch the worshipers by surprise. If so, chamber 9 contains roughly a dozen kneeling worshipers, some of whom the PCs might recognize from town. (This includes Lena from the Bountiful Tide General Store,

and any remaining staff from the Smooth Sailing.) These worshipers are not combatants, and if the PCs burst in, they attempt to flee, either moving around the party or up the stairs toward the secret door. The PCs might try to stop them, or not, as they choose.

If the PCs enter area 9 within 3 minutes of the start of combat in area 5, they catch the worshipers on their way through the secret door. Thus, they need not search to find it later.

Finally, if the PCs enter by the secret door, the congregants flee (or have already fled, if the PCs triggered the trap) by the main door instead. In any case, if any

worshipers are present, assume that it takes them 2d4 rounds to flee if the PCs do not try to stop them.

A PC whose passive Perception score beats a DC 19 (made so difficult due to both cover and the height difference between chambers) spots Althanis behind the altar. Four rounds after they enter, as soon as they set foot upon the stairs, or as soon as it becomes clear he has been spotted, Althanis speaks to them from above.

“My friends, please.” The voice is that of an old man, old yet firm. It comes from above, from beyond the altar. Now that

your attention has been drawn to him, you can indeed see an elder fellow, his gray hair long and stringy, standing by the basalt block. “There is no need for further violence. Join us. Pledge yourself to the Father of the Deep, and be greatly rewarded. Gold, jewels, and great magic can all be yours, as can forgiveness for those of the flock you have already slain. For Father Dagon is ever accepting.”

The adventure assumes that the PCs refuse this “generous” offer, but they might attempt to bluff Althanis, pretending to acquiesce. However, if the

COMBAT AND WATER

This fight, and several encounters within the caverns, is waged partly on land, and partly in the water. For convenience, the most relevant rules are presented here.

When fighting underwater, the following modifiers apply. Assume that the first two modifiers also apply if a creature on land is making an attack against an underwater creature, with more than a single square of water between them.

- ◆ Creatures using powers with the fire keyword take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- ◆ Characters using weapons from the spear and crossbow weapon groups take no penalties on attacks with those weapons. Characters using any other weapon take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- ◆ Creatures move using their swim speed. A creature without a swim speed must use the Athletics skill to swim, as described in the *Player’s Handbook*.
- ◆ Aquatic: Creatures native to watery environments have the aquatic ability. They gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against opponents that do not have this ability. Aquatic monsters, such as sahuagin, are noted as such in their stat blocks.



PCs accept his offer, he demands that they shed their weapons and abase themselves before the altar of Dagon, so at best, a good bluff might allow them close to him before combat erupts.

If the PCs attempt to mount the steps without agreeing to Althanis's proposal, combat begins.

Tactical Encounter: The Altar of Dagon (page 97).

Questioning Althanis follows the same rules, and can reveal the same information, as questioning Sharallan in area 5.

S10. THE ALTAR OF DAGON

As you near the upper level, the contents of the room become clearer. The statues of tendrils writhe of their own accord, though this might be the result of the continual flames that flicker near them. The altar is an enormous chunk of blackness, as though carved from the night sky, and the serpent that rises from it is primordial, vicious, and angry. At the rear of the room, a pool of brackish water suggests bottomless depths.

Unless they've bluffed their way up or entered by the secret door, combat has most likely begun by the time the PCs reach this point.

The pool, labeled 10A, leads to an underground network of water-filled caves that eventually opens into the ocean at the base of the hill. It also leads to the pool at 11A.

The altar radiates overwhelming illusion magic. Any worshiper of Dagon who prays over the altar for 1 full hour gains benefits similar to those of the *misdirection* spell. They detect to all forms of magic as neutral, rather than chaotic evil. They also detect as nonmagical, making it difficult for others to determine that their alignments have been concealed. This effect lasts for six days.

Tactical Encounter: The Altar of Dagon (page 97).

When the combat is complete, allow the PCs to make a DC 14 Perception check. Success indicates that they have discovered something truly horrific: One of the fish-men bears a tattoo of a gold leaf, scarcely visible beneath its scales. This horrendous abomination was once one of the Goldleaf guards who so recently sacrificed himself to the ocean! (If the PCs stopped all the guards from drowning themselves to date, omit this detail.)

S11. MEDITATION CHAMBER

Like the hallway outside, this chamber is covered on all surfaces with etchings of sea monsters. Here, however, the scent of the ocean is not imaginary, for a pool of brackish water stands in the far side of the room.

Althanis uses this chamber to meditate and to commune with Dagon's aquatic servants in a more private setting than the altar chamber. The pool at 11A connects to 10A, and (eventually) to the ocean.



PART FOUR: CONFRONTATION

(Pre-Dawn Onward)

Even as you emerge from the shrine, any feelings of victory and triumph you might have are cut woefully short. From across the sea, that horrific call sounds yet again. Whatever is happening in this cursed town called Ashenport, it's not over yet.

DAGON'S CALL, SECOND NIGHT

Again, run Dagon's Call as described above. If you don't wish to roll for those at the Smooth Sailing, assume that half the remaining warriors, and all but one of the others (Terza, Matthias, Jandal) succumb. Allow the PCs to deal with them, and any of their own, as they prefer.

The PCs might need to rest and regain spells. The Smooth Sailing Inn is the logical place to do so, but if they take reasonable precautions, they might find other safe spots. If they rest past noon, they might have to deal with yet another Call.

Whatever the case, their only hope of ending this for good is to enter the caves and destroy the true leader of the cult—the alien Voice of Dagon. They might have learned of these caves through questioning the priests in the shrine. If not, there are two further possibilities.

◆ If the PCs are out and about any time between morning and noon, a DC 14 passive Perception reveals a few of the townsfolk coming from the coast near area 12. If confronted, and if the PCs acquire at least 2 victories in the challenge, they admit that this

is the spot from which the fish-men frequently come, and that they were going to seek guidance.

◆ If the PCs fail to find it themselves, one of the surviving visitors at the Smooth Sailing might report having seen the townsfolk there, as above.

DOWN THE CLIFFS

Regardless of how they learn of them, the PCs must approach the caves.

Some 25 feet below, the wrathful sea pounds against unyielding stone. Between the two, the territory over which they battle, is a tiny stretch of rocky beach. Every few moments, it vanishes briefly beneath the waves, only to reappear.

Climbing down the cliff-face requires a DC 20 Athletics check. Once the party is roughly 15 of the 25 feet down, they are attacked by one of Dagon's most horrible servants.

Tactical Encounter: The Wrath of Dagon (page 99).

THE COASTAL CAVERNS

These caves, filled with water and completely hidden except during this lowest tide, are the true heart of Dagon's cult. The walls are unworked stone, the ceilings anywhere from 8 to 20 feet high. Although several caverns are covered in deep water (and are marked as such on the map), *the entire cavern is covered in water to a depth of a few inches. This has no mechanical impact (except where noted), but should remind the PCs that this is an alien environment. The PCs must provide their own illumination.*



C1. THE EARTHEN GULLET

Seawater flows in a shallow stream down the earthen floor of this cave, leading into the darkened maw of the earth.

The fish-men of Dagon have trapped the entrance to the caverns, as marked on the map. The trap is an early warning system that also pins intruders in place, using an adhesive distilled from various sea creatures. In addition, the trap causes a loud crash, alerting the inhabitants of C2 and C4 to the PCs' presence. They then converge, as described in the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: The Killing Caves (page 100).



C2. RESTING CAVE

This cavernous chamber has blackened walls, suggesting in the dim light that it goes on forever. What at first appears to be a great beast rearing from the darkness, a serpent of sharp angles and hideous spines, swiftly reveals itself to be a large idol standing near the far side of the cave.

Depending on how the PCs dealt with the trap, they might face only a pair of fish-men here, or they might have faced them, and the mouther from C4, already.

Tactical Encounter: The Killing Caves (page 100).

The passageway leading to C3 slopes gradually but consistently downward.

C3. MADNESS MADE MANIFEST

Something is very wrong with this cave. The walls, the floor, and the ceiling are all coated in a reflective sheen, as though a great slug had left a trail across them. Even stranger is the stone. Although every other surface within these caverns appears to be water-carved stone, these surfaces boast strange patterns, unusually marred features, and even twisted curves and protrusions. It less resembles stone, and more a hollow in a large lump of clay, formed into random patterns by a child's eager fingers.

The strange patterns in the stone are the result of the gibbering moulder using its acid to reshape the cave to its alien liking. The floor in the center of the cavern slopes steeply downward.

As with the fish-men in C2, the moulder might be encountered here alone, or at C1, depending on circumstances, as described in the tactical encounter.

Tactical Map: The Killing Caves (page 100).

C4. DEEP WATER

The water rushing past your feet begins to pool ever deeper as the passage winds onward. Finally, the claustrophobic corridor opens into an enormous flooded cavern. It's going to require a bit of fancy footwork to work your way through without plunging into the dark and icy depths.

The entirety of this cavern is covered in water (dozens of feet deep where water is marked on the map, only 2 feet deep where it is not). The tendrils attack as soon as anyone comes within reach.

Tactical Encounter: Deep Water (page 102).

C5. THE OVERLOOK

This asymmetrical cavern overlooks another, larger chamber below. In that distant chamber, you can see a sequence of monstrous idols, a great basalt altar like that beneath the church, and a shallow lagoon, roughly 2 feet deep, that runs beneath the distant wall. A moderate slope leads down from your level to the grotto below.

From here, you can see an older woman, clad in black robes, moving around behind the altar.

Much of what the PCs see is an illusion. In addition to the illusory wall marked on the C6 map, there are others that might cause great harm to the PCs. The Perception DC to detect any of these illusions before physically touching them is 19.

◆ The “slope” leading to the lower level (C6) is a sheer drop of about 10 feet. Anyone trying to traverse the slope falls.

◆ The lagoon extends farther east than it appears. (The area between the true shore and the dotted line in the water *appears* to be solid land, thanks to a pair of castings of *hallucinatory item*.) Anyone stepping onto that area immediately sinks, and might be attacked by the Voice (see the tactical encounter).

◆ The “priestess” is a *hallucinatory creature*. If the PCs attack, call out, or take any action she could reasonably “notice,” she appears to cover behind the statue that’s emerging from the water. The Voice hopes this lures one or more of the PCs out into the lagoon.

Tactical Encounter: The Call of the Deep (page 103).

C6. THE LAIR OF THE BEAST

This chamber of horrors becomes clearer as you progress inward. The two smaller idols are statues of the fish-men you've encountered, and their dark stone forms drip with a



thin sheen of oily water. The three larger images are great serpents, emerging from the earth or the water, and foul ichor oozes from their needlelike teeth. The basalt idol, slightly larger than that beneath the church, boasts a rising serpent as well, turned toward the right. It radiates an intense cold. The entire chamber smells horribly of rotting fish.

Again, bear in mind the illusory wall and the fact that the water is deeper than it appears. If the image of the woman hasn't yet retreated behind the statue, she does so now.

The altar radiates powerful divine magic to the detect magic ritual. If a recently drowned corpse is placed upon it, and a worshiper of Dagon then chants an hour's worth of prayers, the body returns to life as one of Dagon's fish-men. Thankfully, it requires

only 20 damage to snap the serpent from the top, and this destroys the altar's magical abilities.

Combat begins when the PCs have spent 1d4 rounds in area 6, or when one enters the deep water.

Tactical Map: The Call of the Deep (page 103).

Treasure: The portion of the cult's wealth that has not yet been distributed or traded for more useful items is stored in the alcove hidden behind the illusion. . It consists of a *shield of protection* (level 3), 2 *potions of healing*, an ivory dolphin statuette worth 200 gp, and 90 gp in various coins.

Ad Hoc Experience: If the PCs destroy the altar (even if only by snapping off the serpent), grant them 500 XP as a minor quest reward.

C7. THE WATERWAY

This broad underground passage leads from deep within the lagoon in C6, under the rear wall, and out to sea.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The moment the Voice of Dagon is slain, or 2d4 rounds after it escapes, read or paraphrase the following.

From within the water, from beyond the cavern walls, seemingly from beyond the borders of reality, you hear it. A hideous shriek, like the unearthly call you've heard so often since your arrival at Ashenport, but somehow changed. Somehow even worse . . .

It is a cry of rage, of fury unabated. Without pause, without breath, it continues, rises, until you can scarcely hear your own thoughts. On it goes, and on, for minutes on end, until you fear your very sanity must crumble beneath its weight.

And then, just like that, it is gone.

This more vicious sound does not entice the PCs in any way, and it requires them to make no saving throws. Rather, this last Call was directed, not at the outsiders, but at Dagon's cultists. The Prince of the Deep does not take kindly to failure, and his wrath is lethal. The PCs have successfully broken the back of Dagon's cult, but even they might be shocked at the extent of their victory. By the time they return to the surface, there's nobody left in Ashenport at all, except for any remaining survivors among the guests at the Smooth Sailing.

When the PCs return to the shore, read or paraphrase the following:

As though it, too, were a tool of the Prince of the Depths—and perhaps it was—the storm abates even as you watch. The pounding of the rain dies into a fine mist, and the clouds shatter like glass, allowing streams of sunlight to pour between them. And that light illuminates a town truly, finally dead. No sign of life remains at all, no trace of any of the town's demon-enthralled citizens. Nothing except a hundred lines of footprints in the muddy beach, footprints that finally disappear into the tides of the wrathful, raging sea . . .

AMBUSH IN ASHENPORT

Encounter Level 6 (2,100 XP)

SETUP

If the PCs pass through the eastern or southern edges of the square, have them roll initiative. Place the two mystic cultists (M) at the spots marked with a red M, and the four thuggish cultists at the spots marked with a T. If the PCs pass to the north or west, use the spots marked green M for the mystics.

- 2 mystic cultists (M)
- 4 thuggish cultists (T)

When the cultists attack, read:

Two men with wild eyes and wielding swords charge from around corners and out of the mists. Lurking behind them, barely visible, stand two others, chanting and gesturing.

Passive Perception Check

Remember to apply a -2 penalty to the party's passive Perception score, due to the rain.

DC 13: *Through the steady downpour, you spot a shadow of movement around two of the nearby corners!*

DC 17: *No, not just two. Half a dozen figures are moving around you through the rain.*

TACTICS

The attackers have only a vague plan; they're mostly counting on surprise and numbers to do the job.

Round One: If the PCs are in one or two clumps, the mystic cultists both open up with *storm of the ocean lord*. Otherwise, one does so, while the other attacks with *Dagon's fang*.

Round Two: If they haven't both done so, the second mystic uses his *storm* attack. Otherwise, they both make

4 Thuggish Cultists (T)		Level 8 Brute
Medium natural humanoid		XP 350 each
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +5	
HP 107	Bloodied 53	
AC 21; Fortitude 21, Reflex 20, Will 18		
Speed 6		
⚔ Heavy Flail (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage.	
🏹 Crossbow (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.	
⚔ Knock 'em Flat (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon	+11 vs. AC; 2d6+8 damage, plus push 2 and knocked prone.	
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +9		
Str 22 (+10)	Dex 16 (+7)	Wis 13 (+5)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 10 (+4)

2 Mystic Cultists (M)		Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 350 each
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +7	
HP 88	Bloodied 44	
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 21		
Speed 6		
⚔ Mace (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon	+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
🏹 Dagon's Fang (standard; at will)	Ranged 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage.	
❄ Storm of the Ocean Lord (standard; recharge 1/2) ♦ Cold	Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 cold damage and target is immobilized until the end of the cultist's next turn.	
⚡ Ring of Terror (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to an adjacent square; encounter) ♦ Fear	Close burst 1, triggering enemy only; +12 vs. Will; push 4.	
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +9		
Str 10 (+4)	Dex 13 (+5)	Wis 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 21 (+9)

fang attacks. All the thuggish cultists already in melee range attempt to use their *knock 'em flat* attack.

Round Three+: The cultists continue making melee and ranged attacks, using area attacks if and when they recharge.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Mud: Due to the heavy rains, all the roads of Ashenport are considered difficult terrain.

Rain: All creatures more than 1 square distant have concealment (-2 to attack rolls). Perception checks take a -2 penalty. The rain automatically extinguishes any unprotected flames.

Tree: A tree is an obstacle that occupies a square. It requires a DC 12 Athletics check to climb.

Walls: The PCs might wish to climb the walls of the nearby buildings to reach a mystic cultist. The walls require a DC 20 Athletics check to climb. Most of the buildings are between 2 or 4 squares high.

CONCLUSION

Once four of the cultists are slain, the survivors attempt to flee or surrender.

THE SEA'S LONG REACH

Encounter Level 8 (1,600 XP)

SETUP

Have the PCs roll for initiative, and provide the read-aloud text. Place the fish-men on either the red or green spots, whichever is more tactically advantageous based on the PCs' starting positions. (Do not mix and match, however; use all red or all green.) The fish-men attempt to attack with surprise, if at all possible.

- 2 fish-man warriors (F)
- 2 fish-man slayers (F)

When the fish-men attack, read:

Shambling toward you come nightmares vomited from the sea itself. Roughly humanoid, they are covered in viscous slime, shifting scales, and fishbelly white flesh. Their huge eyes never blink; their mouths gape and flex, but no sound emerges as they approach. They clutch rusty blades in their webbed hands.

Passive Perception Check

Remember to apply a -2 penalty to the party's passive Perception score, due to the rain.

DC 20: A trio of humanoid figures appear in a flash of lightning, barely visible against the storm. They're humanoid, but your swift glimpse suggests that they're not at all human.

DC 25: Several other creatures lurk in the pouring rain and the shadows behind the first.

TACTICS

Dagon's fish-men are bestial, but effective, warriors.

Round One: The fish-man slayers attempt to move in and make sneak attacks if they remain undetected. Otherwise, each moves to a separate opponent and readies an attack for when their allies move to flank. Two fish-man warriors move to attack the same PCs, assisting their allies with flanking. The third remains on a rooftop, making javelin attacks against the PCs.

Round Two+: As long as they can continue to do so effectively, the fish-men follow the tactics from the first round. The warriors change foes if necessary, using their slippery strike attack to maintain as many flanks with the slayers as they can. If the javelin thrower seems too hindered by the rain and determines that he cannot do much good where he is, he climbs down and joins the melee.

If two of them are slain, the others might fake a retreat, if they are positioned conveniently to a road or a doorway. They come back at the PCs several rounds later, attacking from a different direction.

CONCLUSION

The fish-men fight to the death, even going so far as to commit suicide (treat as a coup-de-grace) if it seems the only way to avoid capture.



3 Fish-Men of Dagon Warriors (F) Level 9 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attacks until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.

HP 97 **Bloodied** 48
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also *radiant weakness*

Speed 6, swim 8
⚔ **Rusty Rapier** (standard; at will) ♦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.

⚔ **Rusty Javelins** (standard; at will)
Ranged 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6, plus 2 poison damage.

⚔ **Slippery Strike** (standard; recharge ⏳ ⏳ ⏳) ♦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8+6 damage, plus 2 poison damage. The fish-man can shift 2 before or after the attack (but not both).

Radiant Weakness
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon warrior to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.

Slippery
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 22 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)



2 Fish-Men of Dagon Slayers (F)		Level 9 Lurker
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious)		XP 400 each
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision	
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attack rolls until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.		
HP 77	Bloodied 38	
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 20		
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also <i>radiant weakness</i>		
Speed 6, swim 8		
⚔ Rusty Rapier (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.		
Lurking Strike		
Gain combat advantage against creatures that cannot see the fish-man at the start of its turn.		
Combat Advantage		
+1d8 damage with rusty rapier.		
Radiant Weakness		
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon slayer to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.		
Slippery		
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal
Skills Stealth +15		
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 22 (+10)	Wis 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 10 (+4)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Mud: Due to the heavy rains, all the roads of Ashenport are considered difficult terrain.

Rain: All creatures more than 1 square distant have concealment (-2 to attack rolls). Perception checks take a -2 penalty. The rain automatically extinguishes any unprotected flames.

Walls: The PCs might wish to climb the walls of the nearby buildings. The walls require a DC 20 Athletics check to climb. Most of the buildings are between 1 and 2 stories (2 or 4 squares) high.

BEYOND THE DOOR

Encounter Level 8 (1,600 XP)

SETUP

Four of the fish-men lurk in wait here, allowing worshippers to pass but ambushing outsiders. The slayers begin at the spots marked, but move into the room once combat begins. As soon as a PC opens any of the doors, read the text below and roll initiative. Odds are good that the fish-men act in the surprise round.

4 fish-man slayers (S)

When the PCs open the door, read:

Immediately from the shadows beyond the door, a rusty blade strikes down at you, grasped in a webbed, scaly fist! At that precise moment, the room's other doors fly open as well, and additional fishy creatures lunge at you with weapons held high.

Perception Check

DC 25: Through the silence, you just barely make out the sound of something moving behind one of the doors.

TACTICS

The fish-men aren't looking for a drawn-out fight here. Their goal is to do a lot of damage up-front, and then sound the alarm.

Round One: The slayers attempt to attack as many PCs as they can while maintaining surprise and or combat advantage. They move swiftly into the room, either attacking surprised PCs, or moving to flank.

Round Two: One of the fish-men might, if it seems appropriate, slip back into the bedroom at S2 and then hide, hoping to lure a PC after it and then

4 Fish-Men of Dagon Slayers (S)		Level 9 Lurker
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious)		XP 400 each
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision	
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attack rolls until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.		
HP 77	Bloodied 38	
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 20		
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also <i>radiant weakness</i>		
Speed 6, swim 8		
⚔ Rusty Rapier (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.		
Lurking Strike		
Gain combat advantage against creatures that cannot see the fish-man at the start of its turn.		
Combat Advantage		
+1d8 damage with rusty rapier.		
Radiant Weakness		
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon slayer to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.		
Slippery		
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal	
Skills Stealth +15		
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 22 (+10)	Wis 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 10 (+4)

sneak attack him. (If this tactic fails, the fish-man reenters the battle in round three: either through the main door, or through the secret door through 1A, if that seems more likely to provide a flank or a surprise.) Another fish-man attempts to retreat through the door to S3. The others gang up on anyone who attempts to stop him, readying actions if necessary.

Round Three: A second fish-man attempts to escape, this time to S5. Again, the remainder move to keep anyone from stopping him.

Round Four+: The remaining slayers fight to the death.



CONCLUSION

If the fish-man fleeing to area 3 escapes, the PCs face him again in area 10. The one fleeing to area 5 faces them again in that room. Because retreat is part of their plan, as opposed to a sign of defeat, award the PCs only half the normal experience for a fish-man who escapes.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Beds (S2): It requires an extra square of movement to step onto a bed. A bed can be turned upright, requiring a DC 12 Strength check, and used for cover.

Doors: Characters can fight from behind the doors and gain cover.

Stairs, Spiral (S1, S3): Characters gain cover against foes below them on spiral stairs because they can easily duck around the staircase's central support.

Stairs, Steep (S3, S4): Steep stairs qualify as difficult terrain. Any creature subject to a push, pull, or slide effect down the stairs falls an additional square and must make an immediate save or fall prone.

THE POOL

Encounter Level 9 (2,100 or 2,450 XP)

SETUP

Given the sounds of battle from S4, it's all but impossible for the PCs to surprise the inhabitants herein (unless they enter by the secret door, in which case you should adjust your description accordingly). Combat begins as soon as the PCs enter the room; read aloud the appropriate text and roll initiative. The spots marked on the map for Sharallan (P), Ritter (R), the thuggish cultists (T), and the fish-man slayers (S) are starting points only; they might well have moved by the time the PCs first see them.

Sharallan, Priestess of Dagon (P)
Alderman Ritter, mystic cultist (R)
3 thuggish cultists (T)
1 fish-man of Dagon slayer (S)*

* If a fish-man escaped to S5 from the battle at S4, there are two present here, not just one.

When the fish-men and thugs move to attack, read (adjusting as necessary if the number of fish-men present varies):

Accompanied by [another/two] of the horrible, pallid fish-men, a quartet of townsfolk converge upon you. They hold their flails high, and their eyes burn with fanaticism.

When the casters first take action, read:

The curtain bisecting the room ripples, and you see a pair of faces appear around its edges. One is male, one female, and both move their lips in a sonorous, disturbing chant.

TACTICS

The defenders here are prepared for battle, and they are determined to make the PCs pay for their gall at invading the shrine!

Round One: The thuggish cultists move in on the party, hoping perhaps to catch them before they've all come through the door. The fish-man (or fish-men) moves to flank opposite them. Sharallan and Ritter attack from around the curtain—using either ranged or area attacks, as befits the positioning of the PCs and their own allies—and then disappear behind it, taking advantage of what protection it offers.

Sharallan, Cult of Dagon Priestess (P) Level 8 Elite Controller Medium natural humanoid XP 700		
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +8	
HP 176	Bloodied 88	
AC 24; Fortitude 19, Reflex 22, Will 23		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⬇ Mace (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon +13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
⌘ Dagon's Fang (standard; at will) ♦ Psychic Ranged 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage.		
⌘ Dagon's Maw (standard; at will) ♦ Psychic Make two <i>Dagon's fang</i> attacks.		
⚡ Deathly Storm (standard; recharge ⏳⏳⏳) ♦ Cold Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 cold damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Sharallan's next turn.		
⬅ Ring of Terror (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to an adjacent square; encounter) ♦ Fear Close burst 1, triggering enemy only; +12 vs. Will; push 4.		
⬅ Horrific Repulsion (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Fear Sharallan recharges and immediately uses <i>ring of terror</i> .		
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common		
Skills Religion +10		
Str 10 (+4)	Dex 14 (+6)	Wis 18 (+8)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 12 (+5)	Cha 21 (+9)

Round Two+: As long as the PCs don't move behind the curtain (or destroy it), the casters continue using it as concealment. The others continue to gang up on them, using their encounter abilities as soon as possible. (A cultist might attempt to pull a bookcase down on a PC if the circumstances permit). All but Sharallan fight to the death.

Alderman Ritter (R) Level 8 Controller Medium natural humanoid XP 350		
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +7	
HP 70	Bloodied 35	
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 21		
Speed 6		
⬇ Mace (standard; at will) +13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
⌘ Dagon's Fang (standard; at will) Ranged 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage.		
⚡ Storm of the Ocean Lord (standard; recharge ⏳⏳) ♦ Cold Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 cold damage and target is immobilized until the end of the cultist's next turn.		
⬅ Ring of Terror (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to an adjacent square; encounter) ♦ Fear Close burst 1, triggering enemy only; +12 vs. Will; push 4.		
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common		
Skills Religion +9		
Str 10 (+4)	Dex 13 (+5)	Wis 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 21 (+9)

FEATURES OF THE ROOM

Bookcases: The bookcases can be climbed with a DC 10 Athletics check. The two smaller ones can be pulled over with a DC 15 Strength check, while the larger can be pulled over with a DC 19 Strength check. A falling bookcase makes a +12 vs. Reflex attack against anyone in an adjacent shaded area. On a hit, they deal 2d6 damage, and the target is knocked prone and immobilized (save ends, and this saving throw gains a +2 circumstance bonus). Characters

3 Thuggish Cultists (T) Level 8 Brute
Medium natural humanoid XP 350 each

Initiative +7 **Senses Perception** +5
HP 107 **Bloodied** 53
AC 21; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18
Speed 6

⚔ **Heavy Flail** (standard; at will) ♦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage.

🏹 **Crossbow** (standard; at will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage.

⚔ **Knock 'em Flat** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 2d6+8 damage, plus push 2 and knocked prone.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +9

Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 13 (+5)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)

1 or 2 Fish-Men of Dagon Slayers (S) Level 9 Lurker
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each

Initiative +14 **Senses Perception** +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attack rolls until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.
HP 77 **Bloodied** 38
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also *radiant weakness*
Speed 6, swim 8

⚔ **Rusty Rapier** (standard; at will) ♦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.

Lurking Strike
Gain combat advantage against creatures that cannot see the fish-man at the start of its turn.

Combat Advantage
+1d8 damage with rusty rapier.

Radiant Weakness
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon slayer to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.

Slippery
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Stealth +15

Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 22 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)

who successfully save immediately move to the nearest nonshaded square.

Curtain: The thick curtain has AC, Reflex, and Fortitude defenses of 2, and 5 hit points.

It costs 1 square of movement to move through the curtain. It blocks line of sight, except for those standing at the very edges (who can look around it).

The curtain can be pulled down with a DC 10 Strength check. The curtain makes a +12 vs. Reflex attack against anyone adjacent to the curtain on one side (chosen by the puller). On a hit, the target is immobilized and blind until the end of its next turn.

Pool: It costs 1 square of movement to step up onto the rim of the pool. The shallow water qualifies as difficult terrain.

CONCLUSION

Sharallan fights until reduced to 10 hit points and then attempts to escape. She does not, however, make use of the secret door; she knows that it's more than her life is worth to lead the PCs to the hidden passage and the fleeing parishioners.



THE HIDDEN HALL

Encounter Level 9 (2,000 XP)

SETUP

The PCs trigger not one, but a pair of traps, when they enter the shaded area. Read aloud the appropriate text and roll initiative. The blue indicates squares subject to the venomous floor trap, whereas the spot marked P indicates the focus point for the phantasmal maw's trap.

Phantasmal maw (P)
Venomous floor (blue squares)



When phantasmal maw triggers, read:

A spot on the wall—a tiny stretch of stone, amid a trio of twisting eels—suddenly glows with an ugly blue radiance. From it fly a quartet of ghostly images.

When the venomous floor triggers, read:

A sudden “snick” sounds out from the floor beneath you, and a trio of tiny, dripping spines jut forth.

Phantasmal Maw Level 10 Elite Lurker
Trap XP 1,000

A trigger lets loose four motes of animated acid, taking the form of phantom beasts of the deep sea.

Trap: This trap triggers the first time someone comes within 4 squares of the focus point, and it attacks living creatures each round.

Perception

- ◆ **DC 19:** The character notices the trap's trigger.
- Additional Skill:** Religion
- ◆ **DC 14:** This trap is focused where several particularly important icons of Dagon merge together along the wall. A character who succeeds at this check identifies the focus and its relationship to the motes.
- **DC 19:** The party gains a +2 bonus to Thievery checks to delay or disable the trap.

Initiative +7

Trigger

The trap releases the maws and rolls initiative when a creature enters the protected area. These traps are enchanted to recognize the devotees of a particular deity so that their presence doesn't trigger the trap. Each maw can move with a fly speed of 10 to reach its chosen target on its turn.

Attack

Standard Action Melee 1

Target: Each mote attacks one random living creature with line of effect to the focus object

Attack: +12 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + 5 acid damage and slowed until the end of the maw's next turn. If the target is already slowed, it takes an additional 1d8 acid damage.

Countermeasures

- ◆ An adjacent character can delay the trigger with a DC 16 Thievery check.
- ◆ An adjacent character can disable the trigger with a DC 21 Thievery check.
- ◆ A character can attack a mote (AC 22, other defenses 22). If the mote takes fire or cold damage, it vanishes until the end of the attacker's next turn, negating its attack that round.
- ◆ A character can attack the focus spot on the wall, attempting to mar the unholy sigils (AC 22, other defenses 19; hp 75). Destroying the focus disables the trap.

Venomous Floor Level 10 Elite Obstacle
Trap XP 1,000

A stretch of hallway is lined with hidden needles that shoot forth from the gaps in the carvings (usually the mouths).

Trap: Needles attack any creature that enters or begins its turn in a trapped square.

Perception

- ◆ **DC 19:** The character can discern all adjacent needle holes.

Additional Skill: Religion

- ◆ **DC 21:** The character identifies the important areas in Dagon's iconography, granting the party a +2 bonus to Perception checks to notice the trapped squares.

Trigger

When a creature enters or begins its turn in a trapped square, the trap attacks that creature.

Attack

Opportunity Action Melee 1

Target: Creature on a trapped plate

Attack: +13 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + 6 poison damage and the target is immobilized until the beginning of its next turn.

Miss: Half damage and slowed until the end of its next turn.

Countermeasures

- ◆ A character who makes a successful Athletics check (DC 5, or DC 10 without a running start) can jump over a single plate.
- ◆ An adjacent character can delay a trigger plate with a DC 10 Thievery check.
- ◆ An adjacent character can disable a trigger plate with a DC 21 Thievery check.

TACTICS

The phantasmal maws pursue characters up to 10 squares beyond the shaded area.

FEATURES OF THE ROOM

Stairs, Steep: Steep stairs qualify as difficult terrain. Any creature subject to a push, pull, or slide effect down the stairs moves an additional square and must make an immediate save or fall prone.

THE ALTAR OF DAGON

Encounter Level 10 (2,750 XP)

SETUP

Althanis and his under-priest stand at the altar where they conducted the service, ready to smite the infidels who have defiled Dagon's shrine. Read aloud the appropriate text, place Althanis (A), the mystic cultist (M), the fish-men slayers (S), and the fish-men warriors (W) as marked. The PCs cannot catch their foes by surprise here (unless they enter through the secret door, in which case they can see the fish-men clearly, and you should alter your descriptions accordingly).

- Althanis, High Priest (A)
- 1 mystic cultist (M)
- 2 fish-man warriors (W)
- 2 fish-man slayers (S)

When combat begins, read:

The old man and another, clad in deep blue robes, gesture toward you. From behind the statues, a number of the flapping, sopping fish-men emerge.

When Althanis is first injured, read:

The old priest suddenly erupts, as though something within struggled to escape. Flesh twists and splits, and his entire body forms a mass of writhing, skin-covered tentacles.

Passive Perception Check

DC 15: A quick flicker of movement suggests that two of the statues—one on the lower level, one above—conceal figures lurking behind them.

DC 17: And there, more movement! All four statues conceal someone lurking in the shadows around them.

TACTICS

This is the heart of their domain, and the zealots are not going down easily. The fish-men make use of the statues' teleportation abilities if doing so allows them to attack more efficiently.

Round One: The fish-men converge on the PCs. The slayers attempt to attack from concealment or with surprise if possible. If they cannot, they move to flank PCs with the warriors. They attempt to remain at the periphery, allowing the priests to use area effects on the bulk of the PCs. The mystic cultist starts with his *storm of the ocean lord* attack, but Althanis first tries to either blind two of the PCs with *Dagon's flame* (if he goes before his fish-man slayers), or he uses *Dagon's fang*. He and the mystic cultist use the altar or the statues as cover, but they do not remain next to one another.

Round Two+: As long as the PCs remain on the ground level, the fish-men continue to harry them

Mystic Cultist (M)		Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 350
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +7	
HP 88	Bloodied 44	
AC 22; Fortitude 19, Reflex 20, Will 21		
Speed 6		
⚔ Mace (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
☞ Dagon's Fang (standard; at will)		
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage.		
⚡ Storm of the Ocean Lord (standard; recharge [1]) ♦ Cold		
Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 cold damage and target is immobilized until the end of the cultist's next turn.		
⬅ Ring of Terror (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves to an adjacent square; encounter) ♦ Fear		
Close burst 1, triggering enemy only; +12 vs. Will; push 4.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Religion +9		
Str 10 (+4)	Dex 13 (+5)	Wis 17 (+7)
Con 16 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 21 (+9)

Althanis, High Priest of Dagon's Cult (A) Level 9 Elite Controller (Leader)		
Medium elemental humanoid		XP 800
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +8; low-light vision	
Dagon's Blessing aura 2; allies that begin their turns in this area gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls until the start of their next turn		
HP 194	Bloodied 97	
AC 25; Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 24		
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Mace (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
☞ Dagon's Fang (standard; at will) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 psychic damage.		
☞ Dagon's Flame (standard; at will) ♦ Radiant		
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 1 and blinded until the end of Althanis's next turn.		
☞ Dagon's Maw (standard; at will)		
Make two <i>Dagon's fang</i> attacks, two <i>Dagon's flame</i> attacks, or one of each.		
⬅ Winding Serpents (standard; recharge [2]) • Necrotic		
Close blast 5; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and phantom serpents wind about the target, restraining the target until the end of its next turn.		
☞ Command (standard; encounter) ♦ Charm		
Ranged 10; +13 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of Althanis's next turn, and the target slides 4 or is knocked prone.		
⬅ Ring of Terror (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves adjacent; encounter) ♦ Fear		
Close burst 1, triggering target only; +13 vs. Will; the target is pushed 4.		
Horrific Repulsion (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Fear		
Althanis recharges and immediately uses his <i>ring of terror</i> .		
Horrid Form (immediate reaction, when first injured in combat; encounter) ♦ Polymorph		
Althanis takes on the form of a grotesque mass of rubbery, squidlike flesh with numerous writhing tendrils. All enemies take a -1 penalty to melee and ranged attacks against Althanis in this form until he is bloodied. Despite the alien appearance, his other abilities remain unchanged.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common	
Skills Religion +9		
Str 10 (+4)	Dex 14 (+6)	Wis 18 (+8)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)	Cha 22 (+10)

2 Fish-Men of Dagon Slayers (S) Level 9 Lurker Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each	
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attack rolls until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.	
HP 77	Bloodied 38
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 20	
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also <i>radiant weakness</i>	
Speed 6, swim 8	
⚔ Rusty Rapier (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.	
Lurking Strike Gain combat advantage against creatures that cannot see the fish-man at the start of its turn.	
Combat Advantage +1d8 damage with rusty rapier.	
Radiant Weakness Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon slayer to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.	
Slippery The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal
Skills Stealth +15	
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 22 (+10)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)
	Wis 14 (+6)
	Cha 10 (+4)

while the priests make ranged attacks from up top. Althanis unleashes his *winding serpents* attack only when at least two or three PCs are in range. If a lone PC draws near him, he uses *command* to knock them back—preferably over the edge, if at all possible.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Altar: The stone altar has AC and Reflex defenses of 3, a Fortitude defense of 15, and 200 hit points. It is attached to the floor, and far too heavy to move. It requires an extra square of movement to step up onto the altar. It provides cover to anyone behind it. Due to the altar's dark energy, all adjacent characters take a

2 Fish-Men of Dagon Warriors (W) Level 9 Skirmisher Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each	
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attacks until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.	
HP 97	Bloodied 48
AC 23; Fortitude 20, Reflex 23, Will 20	
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also <i>radiant weakness</i>	
Speed 6, swim 8	
⚔ Rusty Rapier (standard; at will) • Weapon +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.	
☞ Rusty Javelins (standard; at will) Ranged 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6, plus 2 poison damage.	
⚔ Slippery Strike (standard; recharge Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) Weapon +14 vs. AC; 1d8+6 damage, plus 2 poison damage. The fish-man can shift 2 before or after the attack (but not both).	
Radiant Weakness Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon warrior to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.	
Slippery The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal
Skills Stealth +15	
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 22 (+10)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4)
	Wis 14 (+6)
	Cha 10 (+4)

-1 penalty to attack rolls with divine powers (unless they are worshippers of Dagon).

Ledge: The ledge is roughly 2 squares in height, and it requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Pool: This water is deep. It requires only a DC 10 Athletics check to swim, but it is dark even a mere few feet below the surface, requiring illumination.

Stairs, Steep: Steep stairs qualify as difficult terrain. Any creature subject to a push, pull, or slide effect down the stairs falls an additional square and must make an immediate save or fall prone.

Statues, Medium: The statues have AC and Reflex defenses of 5, a Fortitude defense of 10, and 40 hit points. They can be pushed over with a DC 19

Strength check. A falling statue makes a +11 vs. Reflex attack against a character in a single adjacent square (chosen by the one pushing it over). A hit deals 2d6 + 2 damage and knocks the target prone. The square becomes difficult terrain. The statues in this chamber are mystically linked. Anyone standing adjacent to one can use a move action to teleport adjacent to any of the others. A character who spends 1 full round adjacent to a statue, or who sees someone else make use of the teleportation effect, automatically knows how to do so. A statue that has been pushed over loses this ability.

CONCLUSION

The fish-men fight to the death. If Althanis is reduced to 25 hit points, he attempts to flee. His true objective is not escape; he hopes to ambush the PCs on their way out. Feel free to stage this combat anywhere in the shrine. This time, Althanis fights to the death.



THE WRATH OF DAGON

Encounter Level 8

SETUP

Allow the PCs to place themselves. The Wrath emerges either at the spot marked **W**, or from one square to either side, depending on what is most advantageous based on the PCs' positions.

Wrath of Dagon (W)

When the Wrath of Dagon attacks, read:

An abomination explodes from the surf. Clacking claws, writhing legs, wriggling antennae—it surges to attack!

Passive Perception Check

Apply a -2 penalty to the PCs' passive Perception scores, due to the rain.

DC 21: *Something grotesque moves beneath the surface of the water, making a beeline for the shore!*

TACTICS

Dagon's worshipers aren't pulling any more punches. The Wrath is a foul beast that serves at the demon lord's whim, and its only purpose is to kill.

Round One: The Wrath leaps from the sea to attack PCs who are still climbing. It initiates combat with *wrathful pheromone*. It immediately spends an action point to attack again.

Round Two: If at least a few PCs succumbed to the *wrathful pheromone*, the Wrath of Dagon focuses its attacks on a single PC. If multiple active PCs surround it, it instead launches a *somnolent pheromone* burst, hoping to put some of them out. It then spends its second action point and initiates a grab attack against an isolated PC.

Wrath of Dagon (W) Level 10 Solo Soldier
Medium elemental magical beast (amphibious) XP 2,500

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
Disorienting Pheromone aura 5; creatures that begin their turn in this aura take a -1 penalty to Will defense and a -2 penalty to Perception checks (save ends)

HP 415; **Bloodied** 207

Regeneration 5

AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25

Resist 10 poison; see also *radiant weakness*

Saving Throws +4

Speed 8, climb 4, swim 8; see also *leaping horror*

Action Points 2

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at will) ♦ **Poison**
+17 vs. AC; 2d6+6 damage, and ongoing 5 poison (save ends).

↓ **Snapping Claws** (standard; at will) ♦ **Poison**

Make two claw attacks.

← **Fearful Pheromone** (standard; encounter) • **Fear**

Close burst 3; +15 vs. Will; the target is pushed 4 and takes a -2 penalty to all attack rolls (save ends).

← **Somnolent Pheromone** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Sleep**

Close burst 1; +15 vs. Will; the target falls asleep (save ends); any damage immediately awakens the target.

← **Wrathful Pheromone** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Charm**

Close burst 3; +15 vs. Will; the target must use a standard action on its next turn to make a basic attack against its nearest ally. If no ally is within range of a basic attack, the target loses its standard action for that round.

Leaping Horror

The Wrath can make long and high jumps as though it had a running start even if it does not, and even if leaping from the water. It also gains a +5 racial bonus to Athletics checks made to jump.

Radiant Weakness

Radiant effects cause the wrath of Dagon to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil

Languages Abyssal

Skills Athletics +16

Str 22 (+11)

Dex 20 (+10)

Wis 19 (+9)

Con 22 (+11)

Int 14 (+7)

Cha 15 (+7)

Round Three: If it can maintain the grab, the Wrath leaps back into the water, taking the grabbed PC with it.

Round Four+: The Wrath uses its *fearful pheromone* to keep the PCs from interfering with its attempts to drown or kill a companion.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Cliff: The cliff is roughly 25 feet (5 squares) from top to bottom. It requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Mud: Due to the rains, the beach is difficult terrain.

Rain: All creatures more than 1 square distant have concealment (-2 to attacks). Perception checks take a -2 penalty. The rain extinguishes unprotected flames.

Tide: The tide here is violent and unpredictable. Treat it as a ranged attack against all creatures on the ground, with a recharge of 6 on a d6. The tide goes first in any round where it "attacks." Roll a +14 vs. Reflex attack; on a hit, the target is knocked prone. The Wrath gains a +2 racial bonus to its Reflex defense against this attack, due to its insectoid and aquatic nature.

CONCLUSION

The Wrath of Dagon fights to the death.



THE KILLING CAVES

Encounter Level 10 (2,900 XP)

SETUP

This is potentially the most brutal fight the PCs have faced to date—one that might well repulse them from the caves if they're not careful. The darkly shaded squares indicate the squares that can trigger the trap; the lightly shaded squares indicate additional squares that are attacked when the trap activates.

Once combat begins, read aloud the appropriate text and roll initiative. Place the fish-man slayers (S), the fish-man warriors (W), and the gibbering moulder (G) on the spots as marked. The moulder is on the ceiling, not the floor.

- 1 burning adhesive (shaded squares)
- 3 fish-man slayers (S)
- 2 fish-man warriors (W)
- 1 gibbering moulder (G)

When the PCs trigger the trap, read:

With the sound of creaking metal, a caustic and foul-smelling slime pours down on you from the darkened ceiling above!

When the PCs spot the fish-men, read:

From the darkness of the cave emerge several of the grotesque ichthyian humanoids. Their eyes and mouths gape as they shuffle through the ankle-deep water.

When the PCs detect the gibbering moulder, read:

A terrible, high-pitched cackling rises from the depths, all but drowning out the crashing tide. Slithering and flopping across the cavern's ceiling appears a repulsive mass of bulging flesh, wide and red-veined eyes, and gaping mouths.

Passive Perception Check

Use the passive Perception check to determine if the PCs spot the fish-men converging on them once they've triggered the trap. If they make it through the trap without triggering it, the fish-men aren't expecting them, and thus aren't hiding.

DC 20: *Thankfully, there appear to be only two of the loathsome fish creatures at this time.*

3 Fish-Men of Dagon Slayers (S) **Level 9 Lurker**
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attack rolls until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.

HP 77 **Bloodied** 38
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20

Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also radiant weakness
Speed 6, swim 8

⊕ **Rusty Rapier** (standard; at will) • **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.

Lurking Strike
Gain combat advantage against creatures that cannot see the fish-man at the start of its turn.

Combat Advantage
+1d8 damage with rusty rapier.

Radiant Weakness
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon slayer to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.

Slippery
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Stealth +15
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 22 (+10) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 10 (+4)

DC 25: *Or no, not just two. You couldn't be that lucky. Three others carefully move toward you through the shadows of the cave.*

TACTICS

If the PCs trigger the trap, the fish-men and the gibbering moulder converge on them immediately. If

Burning Adhesive **Level 9 Warder**
Trap XP 400

A great gong sounds off in the distance as a cascade of acidic, sticky liquid flows down from above.

Trap: Tripwires hidden in the contours of the stone floor dump a vat of acidic and highly sticky goo upon those in the target area. Only a character standing in a darkly shaded square risks triggering the trap, but anyone in a dark or light shaded square can be attacked by it. In addition to releasing the adhesive, the trap sounds a great gong when triggered.

Perception
♦ **DC 19:** The character notices a tripwire, which allows him or her to bypass one of the trapped squares.

Additional Skill: Dungeoneering
♦ **DC 14:** The character recognizes that some of the contours of the earth have been deliberately chipped and expanded. The party gains a +2 bonus to Perception checks to spot the tripwires.

Trigger
When a creature enters or begins its turn in a trapped square, the trap attacks.

Attack
Opportunity Action **Burst**
Target: All creatures in shaded squares.

Attack: +12 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + 5 acid damage and restrained until save.
Aftereffect of hit: Slowed until save.

Countermeasure
♦ An adjacent character who has spotted a tripwire can jump over the trapped square with a DC 5 (or 10 without a running start) Athletics check.
♦ An adjacent character can delay the trigger, of that square only, with a DC 19 Thievery check.
♦ An adjacent character can disable the trigger, of that square only, with a DC 21 Thievery check.

2 Fish-Men of Dagon Warriors (W) Level 9 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (amphibious) XP 400 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
Vile Stench aura 2; creatures who begin their turn in the area take a -2 to all attacks until the start of their next turn; this is a poison effect.

HP 97 **Bloodied** 48
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 20
Resist 5 acid, 5 cold, 5 poison; see also *radiant weakness*
Speed 6, **swim** 8

⚔ **Rusty Rapier** (standard; at will) ♦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, plus 2 poison damage.

⚔ **Rusty Javelins** (standard; at will)
Ranged 10/20; +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6, plus 2 poison damage.

⚔ **Slippery Strike** (standard; recharge [☉][☉][☉]) ♦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d8+6 damage, plus 2 poison damage. The fish-man can shift 2 before or after the attack (but not both).

Radiant Weakness
Radiant effects cause a fish-man of Dagon warrior to take a -2 penalty to attacks until the start of the fish-man's next turn.

Slippery
The fish-man gains a +2 racial bonus to all rolls to escape a grab, and to saving throws against immobilization and restraint.

Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal
Str 16 (+7)	Dex 22 (+10) Wis 14 (+6)
Con 17 (+7)	Int 10 (+4) Cha 10 (+4)

the PCs succeed in disarming it before they trigger it, however, combat begins only when they first come into sight of one of their opponents. In this instance, the sound of battle calls the opponents from the other chambers in 2 rounds. The tactics as presented here assume that the PCs triggered the trap.

Round One: The fish-men attempt to flank PCs, or attack using surprise.

The gibbering moulder approaches on the ceiling and unleashes a gibbering attack (to which the fish-men, as allies and creatures of Dagon, are immune). If, however, it cannot catch more than one PC in the attack this round, it double-moves and gibbers next round.

Modified Gibbering Moulder Level 10 Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 500

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4; all-around vision, darkvision
Warped Ground aura 3; enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain.

HP 110; **Bloodied** 55
AC 22; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 19
Speed 5, **climb** 5, **swim** 5

⚔ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Acid**
+15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

⚔ **Gibbering** (free, once on its turn before it takes other actions; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**
Close burst 5; deafened creatures are immune; +12 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the gibbering moulder's next turn.

⚔ **Gibbering Feast** (standard; recharge [☉][☉]) ♦ **Acid**
Close burst 5; unnatural mouths appear on dazed creatures in the burst and bite them; +15 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned	Languages –
Str 19 (+9)	Dex 14 (+7) Wis 8 (+4)
Con 22 (+11)	Int 4 (+2) Cha 18 (+9)

Round Two+: The fish-men continue to fight as above; they are coordinated, but rarely cooperate directly with the moulder.

The round after it makes its gibbering attack, the moulder drops from the ceiling to the floor and then continues its movement, making *gibbering feast* attacks.

Throughout the battle, the fish-men take advantage of the various passages and outcroppings in the caves, taking cover from attacks and then sneaking back around in hopes of attacking from concealment.

CONCLUSION

The fish-men are too fanatical, and the moulder too stupidly predatory, to retreat. They all fight to the death.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ladder: The ladder requires no check to climb, but requires 4 squares of movement to fully traverse.

Slope, Steep: The slope is difficult terrain to anyone moving up, but not down. Any creature subject to a push, pull, or slide effect down the slope falls an additional square and must make an immediate save or fall prone.

Statues, Large: The statues have AC and Reflex defenses of 4, a Fortitude defense of 12, and 80 hit points. Climbing a statue requires a DC 15 Athletics check. They can be pushed over with a DC 19 Strength check. A falling statue makes a +12 vs. Reflex attack against characters in two adjacent square (in a line chosen by the one pushing the statue). A hit deals 2d6 + 4 damage and knocks the target prone. The squares become difficult terrain.

DEEP WATER

Encounter Level 10 (2,500 XP)

SETUP

The tendrils attack as soon as the PCs pass within reach. Read aloud the appropriate text, roll initiative, and place the tendrils of Dagon (T) as marked.

- 4 tendrils of Dagon (T)

When the PCs come within 10 feet of any tendril, read:

A writhing mass of tentacles, far too numerous to belong to any natural creature of a sane and rational world, breaks the surface of the water.

Passive Perception Check

DC 19: *It's all but impossible to see what they might be, but several large shapes lurk beneath the deep water, almost concealed by the shadow and the constant motion of the surface.*

TACTICS

The tendrils aren't smart, they're not clever—but they are hungry.

Round One+: The tendrils remain in the deep water, attempting to use their reach to drag PCs toward them, to bite or drown them. They stay beneath the surface where possible, for added protection against ranged attacks.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Slope, Gradual: Characters cannot use the run action when moving upslope.

Water, Deep: Characters moving into this water must swim. Due to the choppiness of the water and the movement of the tides and the creatures within, this requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Water, Shallow: The shallow water qualifies as difficult terrain.

CONCLUSION

A tendril attempts to jet away, hidden by an ink cloud, if reduced to 15 hit points.



4 Tendrils of Dagon (T)		Level 10 Controller
Medium elemental beast (aquatic)		XP 500 each
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +6; low-light vision	
HP 107; Bloodied 53		
AC 24; Fortitude 24, Reflex 22, Will 20		
Resist 10 poison		
Swim 10		
⬇️ Tentacles (standard; at will)		
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; target is grabbed.		
Threatening Reach		
This creature can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).		
⬇️ Beak (minor; at will)		
Grabbed targets only; +17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.		
⬇️ Drag (minor; at will)		
Grabbed targets only; +15 vs. Fortitude; the target is pulled 2 squares.		
⬅️ Ink Cloud (standard; encounter) ⬆️ Poison		
Close burst 3; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d11 + 4 poison damage.		
<i>Aftereffect:</i> The cloud provides concealment, and it remains until the start of the tendril's next turn.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages None	
Str 22 (+11)	Dex 15 (+7)	Wis 13 (+6)
Con 19 (+9)	Int 3 (+1)	Cha 12 (+6)

ENCOUNTER LEVEL

The tendrils' great reach synergizes well with the deep water, adding an additional 500 XP to the value of the encounter.

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

Encounter Level 10

SETUP

This is it: The PCs have finally reached the grotesquely beating heart of Dagon's cult, an alien, demonic horror known as the Voice of Dagon. Read aloud the appropriate text and roll initiative. The Voice *seems* to appear at the spot marked with a red V. This is another *hallucinatory creature*; the true Voice sits deeper, at the spot marked with a green V. The guardian demons (G) appear to be hybrid horrors, like the Wrath of Dagon, but they're mezzaloths for all intents and purposes.

Voice of Dagon (V)
3 guardian demons (G)

If a PC falls through the illusion, read:

The ground you expected to find beneath your feet isn't there. You feel yourself sinking, and what looked to be relatively shallow water is already well above your head.

When the guardian demons attack, read:

A trio of horrific beasts—amalgams of deep-sea creature and insect, somewhat but not like that of the horror you fought at the cave entrance—step toward you from behind statues in the cave. They each clutch tridents.

When the illusory Voice surfaces to attack, read:

A nightmare of horrendous proportions rises from the rippling surface, a reflection of the ancient, primal evil of Dagon! Tendrils lash outward in all directions as though seeking prey of their own volition. Behind them, inhuman eyes gleam red in the gloom, and enormous gills pulse in time to the beating of some inhuman heart. From the beast, a twisting aura flows, causing all around it to ripple and warp in your sight.

Passive Perception Check

DC 16: *Are you seeing things? Barely visible in the deep, dark water, you spot another terrible shape, like that which lurks near the surface.*

DC 18: *Portions of the room, and indeed even the priestess, don't seem right. They shift and shimmer ever so slightly, as if they are images projected on the canvas of reality.*

TACTICS

The PCs are in for one hell of a fight—one based on deception as much as power. Throughout the battle, the guardian demons make use of the statues' teleportation effects if doing so is tactically sound.

Round One: The illusory Voice makes vague gestures toward the PCs, as though calling upon its powers. The true Voice glides closer to the surface so that it can attack with *frigid burst*, making it appear as though the illusion launched the attack. A guardian demon uses its poison breath on a group of PCs, while the others attempt to restrain PCs with their skewering tines.

Round Two: The illusory Voice goes through the precise same motions; allow the PCs a DC 19 Perception check to see that it's repeating its actions, as though looped. A PC who notices this immediately gains a Perception check to see through the illusion. The guardian demons continue to trade off, one using *poison breath* while the others use their tines.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL

The Voice's preparations for combat, and the synergy with its abilities and the watery environment, add an additional 400 XP to the encounter total.

Round Three+: Once its illusion has been identified, or after 3 rounds, the Voice surfaces to make use of its more direct abilities. It starts with a *venom spray*, and then attempts to *dominate* a PC, either using the target to attack its foes or having the target walk out into the water to drown. The guardian demons continue to gang up on PCs, focusing their efforts particularly on those who can harm the Voice.

CONCLUSION

The guardian demons fight to the death. When reduced to 23 hit points, the Voice fakes a retreat, diving deep into the water, only to resume the attack 1d3 rounds later. When reduced to 10 hit points, it genuinely tries to flee, retreating to the deep ocean and abandoning Ashenport to its fate.

3 Guardian Demons (G)		Level 11 Soldier
Large elemental humanoid (demon)		XP 1,000
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
HP 113; Bloodied 56		
AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 22, Will 23		
Resist 10 poison, 10 variable (2/encounter; see <i>Monster Manual</i> glossary)		
Speed 6		
⊕ Trident (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage.		
⊕ Skewering Tines (standard; sustain standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is restrained (until escape). The guardian demon can sustain the power as a standard action, in which case the target takes 1d8 + 5 damage and is still restrained. While the target is restrained, the guardian demon can't make trident attacks.		
⊕ Poison Breath (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) ♦ Poison		
Close blast 3; the guardian demon breathes a cloud of poison gas that fills the area; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 poison damage and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Abyssal
Skills Intimidate +11, Perception +13		
Str 20 (+10)	Dex 15 (+7)	Wis 16 (+8)
Con 17 (+8)	Int 10 (+5)	Cha 13 (+6)

Voice of Dagon (V) Level 12 Elite Artillery
Large elemental magical beast (demon) XP 1,400

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Riptide aura 5; enemies treat the area as difficult terrain.
HP 192; **Bloodied** 96
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 26
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5, swim 10
Action Points 1

- ⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at will)
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the target is chaos-touched (save ends; see *chaos warp* below).
- ⊕ **Tentacle Lash** (standard; at will)
Make two *tentacle* attacks.
- ⤴ **Venomous Spit** (standard; at will) ♦ **Poison**
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 poison damage, and the target is chaos-touched (save ends; see *chaos warp* below).
- ⤴ **Venomous Stream** (standard; at will) ♦ **Poison**
Make two *venomous spit* attacks.
- ⤴ **Dominate** (standard; at will) ♦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; the target must be humanoid and must be chaos-touched; +17 vs. Will; target is dominated (save ends). The Voice of Dagon can dominate only one creature at a time.
- ⤴ **Chaos Warp** (immediate interrupt; at will)
The Voice can cause a chaos-touched creature to immediately reroll one attack roll, check, or save. The

target must take the lower roll. No attack roll is required, but only chaos-touched creatures can be affected. (The Voice can use this power only once per round in total, not once per round per chaos-touched creature.)

- ❄ **Frigid Burst** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Cold**
Area burst 4 within 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 cold damage, and the target is chaos-touched and immobilized (save ends both; see *chaos warp* above).
- ⤴ **Venom Spray** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Poison**
Close burst 5 (affects enemies only); +17 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 poison damage, and the target is chaos-touched (save ends both; see *chaos warp* above).

Dagon's Proxy
Against a chaos-touched target, the Voice of Dagon gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals +2d6 damage with a successful tentacle attack.

Lord of Illusions
The Voice of Dagon can cast illusion rituals without paying the component cost.

Threatening Reach
The Voice of Dagon can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (3 squares).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +16

Str 21 (+11)	Dex 14 (+8)	Wis 23 (+12)
Con 18 (+10)	Int 21 (+11)	Cha 18 (+10)



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Altar: The stone altar has AC and Reflex defenses of 3, a Fortitude defense of 15, and 200 hit points. It is attached to the floor, and far too heavy to move. The serpentine head rearing off the image, however, is treated as a smaller object, with defenses of 8 and 20 hit points. It requires an extra square of movement to step up onto the altar. It provides cover to anyone behind it. Due to the altar's dark energy, all adjacent characters take a -1 penalty to attack rolls with divine powers (unless they are worshipers of Dagon).

Ledge: The ledge is roughly 2 squares high and requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Statues, Large: The statues have AC and Reflex defenses of 4, a Fortitude defense of 12, and 80 hit points. Climbing a statue requires a DC 15 Athlet-

ics check. They can be pushed over with a DC 23 Strength check. A falling statue makes a +11 vs. Reflex attack against characters in 2 adjacent squares (in a line chosen by the one pushing the statue). A hit deals 2d6 + 4 damage and knocks the target prone. The squares become difficult terrain. The statues in this chamber are mystically linked. Anyone standing adjacent to one can use a move action to teleport adjacent to any of the others. A character who spends 1 full round adjacent to a statue, or who sees someone else make use of the teleportation effect, automatically knows how to do so. A statue that has been pushed over loses this ability.

Statues, Medium: The statues have AC and Reflex defenses of 5, a Fortitude defense of 10, and 40 hit points. They can be pushed over with a DC

19 Strength check. A falling statue makes a +11 vs. Reflex attack against a character in a single adjacent square (chosen by the one pushing it over). A hit deals 2d6 + 2 damage and knocks the target prone. The square becomes difficult terrain. The statues in this chamber are mystically linked. Anyone standing adjacent to one can use a move action to teleport adjacent to any of the others. A character who spends 1 full round adjacent to a statue, or who sees someone else make use of the teleportation effect, automatically knows how to do so. A statue that has been pushed over loses this ability.

Water, Deep: Characters moving into this water must swim. Due to the choppiness of the water and the movement of the tides and the creatures within, this requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

OUT IN THE WILD

Encounter Level 11 (3,000 XP)

SETUP

This encounter occurs only if the PCs attempt to flee Ashenport. Place the PCs as appropriate along the path, then read the text below.

1 horrid timber (M)

When the horrid timber attacks, read:

The branches and leaves of the surrounding foliage whip about violently in the heavy winds and crushing rains. Only at the last second does it become apparent that some of the plants are thrusting forward, against the wind! From out of the trees comes a terrible mass of writhing vines and vicious thorns that gnash together like grinding teeth. An ichor that glistens even through the rain drips from the vines.

Passive Perception Check

Remember to apply a -2 penalty to the party's passive Perception score, due to the rain.

DC 27: *Something large is moving through the wood beside the road. It blends almost invisibly into the foliage, but you can tell its there by the movement of the branches.*

TACTICS

Round One+: The horrid timber attacks with a *spore pod* in the first round, unless the PCs have already scattered too far to do so. Beyond that, it lashes about with its branches. Unless it's surrounded by multiple melee combatants, it launches at least two attacks at each individual, in hopes of knocking them prone. Unless doing so draws an opportunity attack, it uses its *spore pod* in each round where that attack is available.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL

The horrid timber's ability to ignore the winds grants it a major advantage in this battle, adding 500 XP to the value of the encounter.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

Mud: Due to the rains, the road is difficult terrain.

Storm: All adjacent creatures have concealment (-2 to attack rolls), while those farther away have total concealment (-5 to attack rolls). Perception checks take a -5 penalty. The rain automatically extinguishes any unprotected flames.

Horrid Timber (M)	Level 10 Solo Soldier
Large elemental animate (demon, plant)	XP 2,500
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +9; darkvision
Tangle Roots aura 4; all nonplant creatures treat the area as difficult terrain	
HP 444	Bloodied 222
AC 28; Fortitude 27, Reflex 24, Will 25	
Resist 10 poison	
Saving Throws +4	
Speed 4	
Action Points 2	
⬇ Flailing Branch (standard; at will)	
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⬇ Whipping Branches (standard; at will)	
Make up to four <i>flailing branch</i> attacks, but it cannot attack the same target more than twice. If two or more hit the same target, that target is knocked prone.	
✳ Spore Pod (standard; ☒ ☒)	
Area burst 1 within 10; +15 vs. Fortitude; target begins to sprout thorns that grow through its skin; this deals ongoing 5 damage and causes the target to become slowed (a single save ends both).	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal
Skills In areas of overgrowth and forest terrain, the horrid timber gains +10 to Stealth checks	
Str 22 (+11)	Dex 15 (+7)
Con 23 (+11)	Int 7 (+3)
	Wis 19 (+9)
	Cha 15 (+7)



Tree: A tree is an obstacle that occupies a square. It requires a DC 15 Athletics check to climb.

Wind: Movement in any direction other than southwest is automatically slowed. The horrid timber is large enough to ignore this effect.

CONCLUSION

The horrid timber is an alien predator, with no real sense of self-preservation. It fights to the death. ☹

About the Author

Ari Marmell has been writing RPGs and fiction for many years now, and has over a dozen credits for Wizards of the Coast. He's recently been reading far more H.P. Lovecraft than is probably good for him. Any similarities between Ashenport and a small New England city known as Innsmouth are not even remotely coincidental. *Iā! Iā!*