

LEVEL 10 ADVENTURE MODULE

# FIFTH EDITION FANTASY #15

## THE DROWNING CAVERNS OF THE FISH GOD

BY AERYM RUDEL



5E



# DROWNING CAVERNS OF THE FISH GOD

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# DROWNING CAVERNS OF THE FISH GOD

**D***rowning Caverns of the Fish God* is an adventure designed for use with the 5th edition of the first fantasy roleplaying game. It is intended for four to six 10th-level characters and can be completed in a single session. During the course of this scenario, the party aids a small village called Drydale with a terrifying problem.

Townfolk have been disappearing and sometimes returning having undergone terrible surgical experiments. The party uncovers the malignant force behind these occurrences, an aboleth, tracks it back to its mountain lair, and battles the monstrosity and its enslaved minions to end its predations on Drydale.

## BACKGROUND

**M**ost aboleths view their enslaved minions as little more than cannon fodder, a bulwark of flesh to protect their masters from harm. An aboleth may be momentarily intrigued by a new slave with a unique skill or ability, but such interest fades quickly in the wake of its own selfish desires.

Psirathex is an aboleth who stands apart, a monster who fancies itself a scientist and its enslaved minions blank canvases on which it can improve their crude forms. Psirathex “improves” his minions by performing radical brain surgery on them—it has modified two of its tentacles with keen, scalpel-like blades. This process is not entirely surgical, however, and the aboleth uses its considerable psionic powers to further augment the physical changes it makes to its slaves’ anatomy. Though Psirathex’s surgeries sometimes lobotomize its victims, its techniques have improved over the years, and it can now strengthen the control it exerts over a slave and grant it psionic powers. Minions that survive the process are called awakened thralls (and gain the new template presented in the appendix).

Unfortunately, Psirathex’s remote lair in the deep provided it with few suitable subjects for its work. The various subterranean creatures prowling the tunnels around its lair proved limited in intellect, reducing the efficacy of a successful augmentation. Psirathex’s primary success was in the creation of new breeds of skum, aquatic humanoids bred as slaves by aboleths for millennia.

Psirathex craved new subjects and new minds for its experiments, and it left its lair deep in the earth and followed

a network of drowned passages up through the mountains to a small subterranean lake not far from the surface. Its new mountain abode provided what appeared to be a wealth of creatures to enslave and experiment on, but the savage goblinoids, gnolls, and giants in the mountains could only be augmented so far.

Still, the aboleth amassed a sizable horde of minions, and though they could not provide it with the raw material it desired, their strength and ferocity could be used to acquire them. Psirathex sent its thralls ranging farther and farther afield, carrying back all manner of creatures for their master’s experiments. Still, the aboleth was unsatisfied with the beasts and humanoids its minions brought back until they happened upon the small village of Drydale. Here the aboleth found a choice collection of brains and potential subjects, including former adventurers.

Psirathex’s slaves have been kidnapping people from Drydale in the night, and those that do not take to the aboleth’s augmentation are generally killed and eaten by its more savage minions. In a few cases, these unfortunates escape and wander back to town with no memory except a horrible dream of drowning. The aboleth has, however, experienced great success with a dwarven fighter named Kathrak Stoneshield, a wizard named Hannah Drydale, and Hannah’s apprentice, Uther Drydale. These already skilled individuals have become even more powerful with Psirathex’s augmentations, and they are proof positive the aboleth’s experiments can and will bear potent fruit.

All it needs are more bodies.

# BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins when the party learns of Drydale's plight and chooses to help the town. The leader of Drydale's council of elders, Jacob Evenbow, has sent men and women he trusts to large cities looking for adventurers to aid the town. One of these scouts can approach the party and request their aid. Drydale is in a unique position in that adventurers have retired there and sit on the town's council of elders. As such, Drydale has resources beyond what its size would indicate and it can offer a substantial bounty in both coin and magical items.

The party may also simply stumble upon Drydale while travelling from one adventure to another. In this case, if the heroes visit the town's inn, Jacob Evenbow and three of the other town elders seek them out and make the same offer as above.

## THE TROUBLE IN DRYDALE

Jacob Evenbow or one of the council elders explains what has happened in their town. People have been disappearing at an alarming rate, ripped from their beds in the middle of the night. A rare few come back, and when they do, there are terrible wounds in their skulls, as if something bored straight through the bone and into their brains. They have no memory of what happened, and most only remember going to sleep the night they were taken and experiencing a terrible dream of drowning. Odder still, one or two of these returned exhibiting strange powers.

The party should interview one or more of the people that have returned. They are in sorry shape. An examination reveals the hair has been shaved above their right temples, and a long deep incision cut into the flesh and the bone beneath. Close examination reveals this is not a wound; it is a surgical incision that has been cleanly and expertly sutured. One of the people they interview has a very minor inoffensive psionic ability they didn't possess before (*mage hand* would be a good choice). The characters can also learn the people who have been targeted tend to have some useful skill or experience: tradesmen, skilled artisans, and, of course, former adventurers.

## THE VILLAGE OF DRYDALE

**Population:** 275

**Government:** Drydale is run by a council of five elders, led by Jacob Evenbow.

**Defense:** The town has long relied on a small group of retired adventurers for its defense. This includes Jacob Evenbow, Kathrak Stoneshield, Hannah Drydale, and Jarek Hearthwright. With Hannah, Kathrak, and Jarek missing, only Jacob Evenbow remains to defend the town.

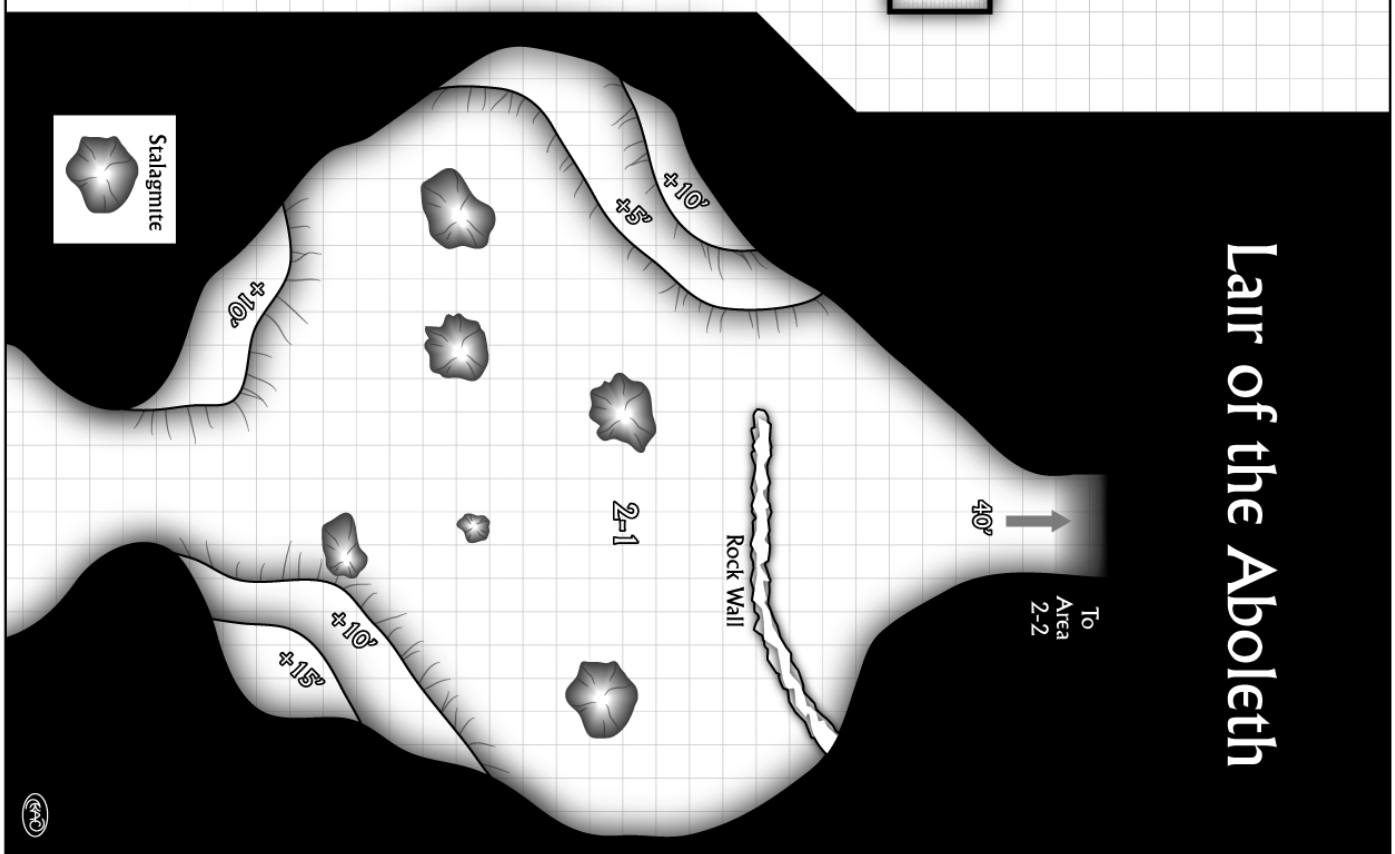
**Commerce:** Basic supplies are readily available through the blacksmith and small general store. The village's small population of retired adventurers might also sell rarer items on an individual basis.

**History:** Drydale was founded only 30 years ago by Gregor Drydale, an adventurer seeking a peaceful spot to retire and raise his daughter, Hannah. Local farmers and tradesmen beyond the local monarchy's sphere of protection began building homes and farmsteads near the retired adventurer. Gregor offered to protect them from the hostile tribes of goblinoids in the area for a share of their goods. Soon more people settled, including some of Gregor's former adventuring companions, and Drydale became a proper village. In time, Gregor's daughter took up the mantle of adventurer, and when her dungeon raiding days were done, she, too, settled in Drydale along with her dwarven companion Kathrak Stoneshield.

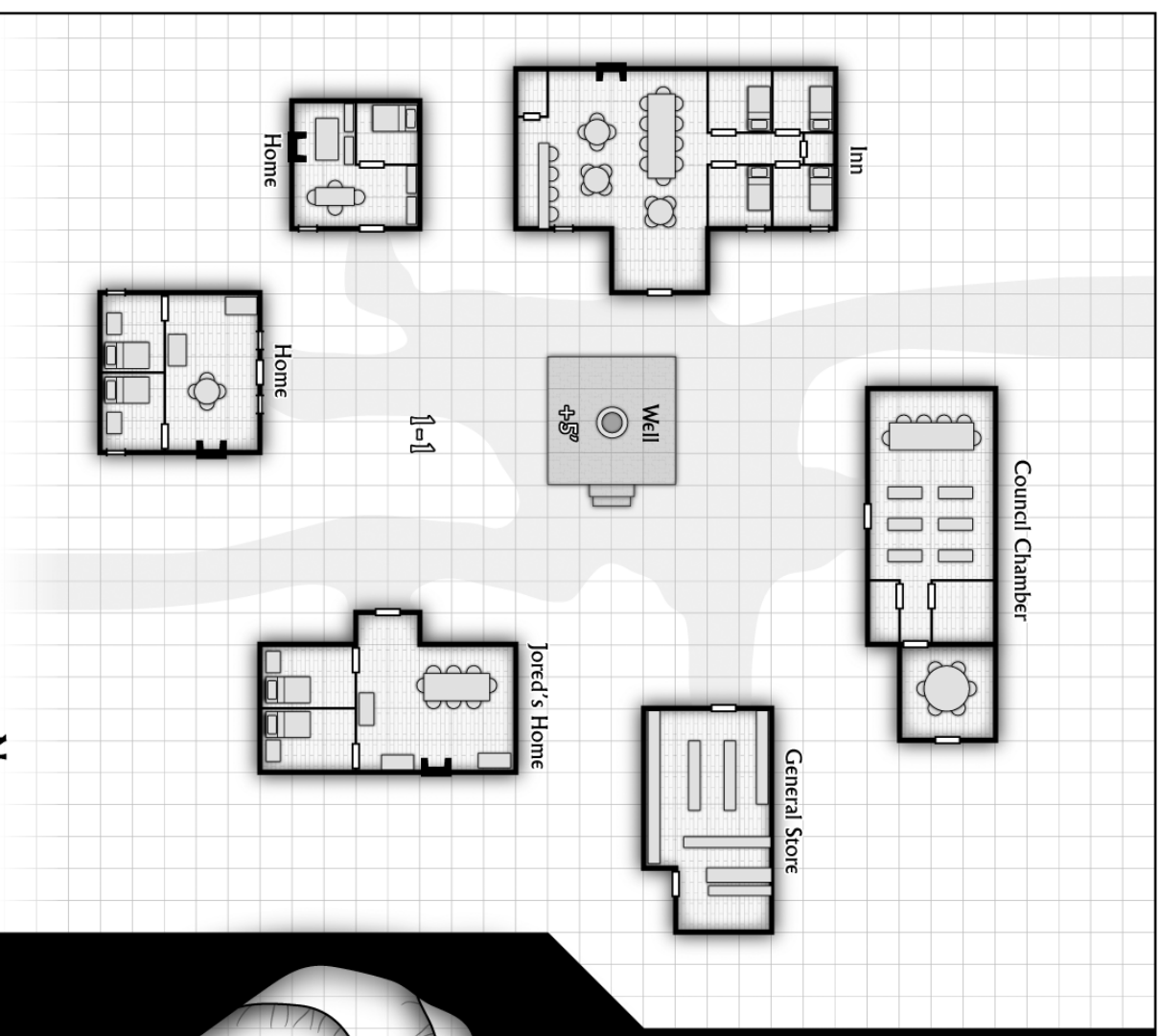
The party are asked to locate the people who are still missing, including three of note. The first is a dwarven fighter named Kathrak Stoneshield. The second is a wizard named Hannah Drydale. Hannah's apprentice Uther Drydale is also missing. Drydale relied on these former adventurers for protection, and without them, they are more vulnerable to the predations of the aboleth.

The town offers a substantial reward for returning the missing citizens and finding and defeating whatever is kidnapping them. The offer is 500 gp per hero plus each hero's choice of one magic item from the retired adven-

# Lair of the Aboleth



# Drydale Night Raid



turers' collections. The GM can roll randomly to determine the magic items on offer, but they come from tables F, G, or H in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

**Quest: Find and Return *Kegsplitter*.** At some point while the characters are in Drydale, a woman by the name of Mira Hearthwright approaches them with an additional quest. Her husband, another former adventurer named Jarek Hearthwright, was one of the first to go searching for the missing people of Drydale. He took his magical axe, *Kegsplitter*, with him, an heirloom passed down over many generations of Hearthwright sons and daughters.

Mira has accepted that her husband will not return, but she wants to give *Kegsplitter* to her daughter Jayla when she comes of age. She asks the characters to find the axe and return it to her. She has little to offer in the way of a reward, but kindly heroes should care little for such things. Less kindly heroes might simply keep the axe if they can find it.

## AREA 1-1 – DRYDALE NIGHT RAID

While the heroes are in Drydale, Psirathex's minions mount a raid on the town in the night. The raiding party is led by Uther Drydale. Psirathex believes it has removed any ardent resistance from the town. As such, its minions are not as stealthy as they might be. Their target is Drydale's blacksmith, Jored. His home is near the center of town. When the raiders attack, read the following:

*Screams and shouts, followed by an alarm bell, shatter the night. "They have returned!" a terrified voice cries.*

When the heroes investigate and see the raiders, read:

*A young human man stands outside a house flanked by a pair of burly hobgoblins. Screams echo from the house, and then a scaly horror emerges into the street. Goggling eyes bulge from its misshapen head and its toothy maw hangs open as it draws deep shuddering breaths. The monster clutches the limp body of a man in its long, sickle-like claws.*

The raiding party consists of **Uther Drydale**, **human awakened thrall**, three **skum**, and two **charmed hobgoblin veterans**. All are charmed by Psirathex, but see the Charmed, I'm Sure sidebar for resolving the effects of the aboleth's mind control over its victims.

Uther Drydale orders the hobgoblins to stand guard while the skum attempt to carry Jored away. Once they have their target in hand, the raiding party attempts to



return to Psirathex's lair. If the party confronts Uther, he attacks. He and the hobgoblins hang back to attack the party with spells and ranged weapons while two of the skum engage them in melee. The third skum attempts to flee with Jored (moving at half speed because of the burden). Psirathex is careful with his minions so far from the lair, as there is more chance Uther and the hobgoblins will be freed from the aboleth's enslavement.

Uther communicates with Psirathex telepathically during the battle, and if the heroes are handling the hobgoblins and skum easily, the aboleth orders Uther to return to the lair immediately, hoping to preserve a valued slave.

If the heroes manage to free Uther from his enslavement during the battle, he is disoriented for 1 round, taking no action, and then joins the PCs against the skum and hobgoblins. At this point, Psirathex considers him a lost cause and orders its remaining minions to attack him as well as the heroes.

If freed from Psirathex's enslavement, Uther, like the

others, has no memory of what happened to him. He is only an apprentice, and will not accompany the heroes when they set out in search of the aboleth's lair. Instead, he stays behind to bolster Drydale's defenses.

## UTHER DRYDALE, HUMAN AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (human), neutral good*

**AC:** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points:** 38 (7d8 + 7)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws:** Int +5, Wis +2

**Skills:** Arcana +5, History +5

**Senses:** passive Perception 10

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarvish, Elvish, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Endless Servitude:** Uther has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of Uther suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics):** Uther's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: *mage hand, resistance*
- 3/day each: *blade ward, true strike, vicious mockery*

**Spellcasting:** Uther is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*
- 1st level (4 slots): *burning hands, detect magic, mage armor, shield*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *blur, mirror image, scorching ray*

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### ACTIONS

**Quarterstaff:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

**Perfect Precognition (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, Uther catches a quick glimpse of the future. He gains advantage and scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on his next attack roll.

### SKUM (3)

*Medium humanoid (skum), lawful evil*

**AC:** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Skills:** Perception +2

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** Deep Speech

**Challenge:** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious:** The skum can breathe air and water.

**Eternal Servant:** The skum is considered charmed by the aboleth it serves, as described under the aboleth's Enslave ability. The skum can, however, still take reactions and the charmed condition cannot be ended by any means.

**Regeneration:** The skum regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

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### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The skum makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

**Claws:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target suffers an additional 11 (2d6 + 4) damage.

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

*This scaly humanoid combines fish and reptilian traits in a disturbing amalgamation, and its goggling eyes and fanged maw are reminiscent of things that squirm in the lightless depths of the ocean. The creature has long, sinewy arms, sickle-like claws, and it moves with a hopping batrachian gait.*

## CHARMED HOBGOBLIN VETERAN (2)

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), lawful evil

AC: 17 (splint)

Hit Points: 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed: 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

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**Skills:** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** Common, Goblin

**Challenge:** 3 (700 XP)

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**Martial Advantage:** Once per turn, the hobgoblin can deal an extra 10 damage (3d6) to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the hobgoblin that isn't incapacitated.

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### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack:** The hobgoblin makes two longsword attacks.

**Longsword:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Heavy Crossbow:** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 3,850 XP among the characters if they defeat or drive off the raiding party. Do not award XP for Uther Drydale if the heroes use lethal blows against him.

## CHARMED, I'M SURE

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All the monsters in the adventure have been charmed by Psirathex, by use of its Enslave ability. When they take damage, there is a chance they break free of the aboleth's control. If that happens, it does not mean these creatures become allies of the characters. Instead, they are likely to be disoriented, terrified, or just really angry. In other words, they may *still* attack or continue attacking. The GM should allow players a chance to notice something is wrong with a monster that has become free of the aboleth's enslavement. The characters might then attempt to convince the creature to either stop attacking or even join them. The success of such a ploy hinges on how the characters approach the creature, if they can communicate with it, and its alignment and general tendencies.

Psirathex's skill at altering its victims includes weakening their resistance to its Enslave ability. See the list of regional effects in Lair of the Aboleth section and the Awakened Thrall template in the appendix for more details.

Note that the skum are not charmed in the usual way. They are a servitor race, and the charmed condition is permanent and cannot be broken by any means.

Savvy players may divine other ways to break through or suppress Psirathex's enslavement, by using spells like *calm emotions* or *greater restoration*. Smart use of such tactics could gain the heroes powerful allies in the final fight against the aboleth.



## LAIR OF THE ABOLETH

Psirathex's lair is in the mountains above Drydale. Its primary feature is a small underground lake that leads to a group of caverns through a series of drowned passages. The main cavern was originally the home of a small band of stone giants. Psirathex and its skum surprised the giants and slaughtered most of them. The two remaining now serve as guardians for the aboleth's lair.

### GENERAL FEATURES

The upper levels of Psirathex's lair are natural caverns. The ground is rock; it's uneven but does not constitute difficult terrain. There are no doors in the lair, and caverns are connected by open passages.

**Ceilings.** Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings for the rooms and passages in the lair are unworked stone measuring 10 to 12 feet in height.

**Light.** Glowing lichen clings to the walls and ceilings of the lair, providing an eerie green light throughout. Unless otherwise noted, consider all areas in the lair to be dimly lit.

**Regional Effects.** Psirathex's malignant psychic energy has suffused the area around its lair, creating the following effects:

- A bizarre green lichen grows on all underground surfaces within 1 mile of Psirathex's lair. The lichen provides dim light out to 20 feet.
- Creatures charmed by Psirathex within 1 mile of its lair that suffer damage in combat cannot attempt the Wisdom saving throw to end the charmed condition unless they suffer 15 or more damage from a single attack.
- When a creature hostile to Psirathex finishes a long rest within 1 mile of the aboleth's lair, roll a d20 for that creature. On a roll of 10 or lower, the creature is subjected to Psirathex's Enslave ability (normal saving throw applies). This does not count toward the aboleth's daily uses of this ability.

If Psirathex dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

## APPROACHING THE LAIR

Psirathex's lair is not far from Drydale, about a half-day's journey up into the mountains. Although the aboleth lurks in a subterranean lake below, the upper levels of the lair are simple caverns, the largest of which opens to the surface. Tracking the aboleth's minions back to the lair requires only a simple DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. When the party reaches the entrance to the lair read:

*A massive cavern yawns open in the bare mountainside. Within, an eerie green light casts strange and ominous shadows.*

### AREA 2-1 – GIANT GUARDS

*This ceiling of this huge vault-like cavern soars 30 feet above the rocky floor. The light is dim and seems to emanate from patches of green lichen clinging to the walls. The floor is strewn with rubble and the odd stalagmite, and a tall wall constructed of stacked boulders conceals a large part of the cavern from view.*

There are two **charmed stone giant hunters** hiding behind the wall to the north. They are waiting for the characters to enter the cavern so they can hurl rocks at them from behind cover. Once the heroes close for melee, the stone giants wade into battle with their clubs. If one or both of the stone giants are freed from Psirathex's enslavement, they are unlikely to break off attacks, being too frightened and angry to think clearly. If the heroes notice the change in behavior, they might be able to influence the giants and convince them they are not enemies. Even so, the stone giants are not willing to aid the heroes beyond breaking off hostilities and fleeing the cavern if the characters let them.

The giants have constructed a living chamber of sorts behind the wall and keep all their possessions there. A quick search of the giant's living area uncovers 210 sp, 50 ep, 100 gp, a *potion of greater healing*, and a *spell scroll of cure wounds*.

## CHARMED STONE GIANT HUNTER (2)

*Huge giant, neutral*

**AC:** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 126 (11d12 + 55)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws:** Dex +5, Con +8, Wis +4

**Skills:** Athletics +12, Perception +4

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages:** Deep Speech, Giant

**Challenge:** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Stone Camouflage:** The giant has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The giant makes two greatspear attacks.

**Greatspear:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage.

**Rock:** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (4d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### REACTIONS

**Rock Catching:** If a rock or similar object is hurled at the giant, the giant can, with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, catch the missile and take no bludgeoning damage from it. (Note: While charmed, the giant cannot use this ability.)

**Developments.** Unless the heroes take extreme caution here, Psirathex knows immediately when they attack. In addition, because it can communicate with its charmed minions telepathically, they, too, know the characters have arrived. The aboleth does not send all its minions charging in immediately, however, and lets the characters battle the stone giants for a few rounds before it takes action. This is partly because it does not wish to risk its awakened thralls unnecessarily.

If the characters are faring well against the stone giants, Psirathex sends the awakened thrall Barthag and her bugbears (area 2-2) into battle. In this case, the bugbear cut-

throats wade into melee while Barthag hangs back and uses Puppeteer to grant them additional attacks. Barthag enters melee herself until Puppeteer recharges, then pulls back and uses it again. If the characters defeat the stone giants *and* Barthag's bugbears, Psirathex does not send more minions to confront them right away. Instead, it uses Narghal and his gnolls (area 2-3) to soften them up before Kathrak and the hobgoblins (area 2-4) strike the finishing blow.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 5,800 XP among the characters if they defeat the stone giant hunters or free them from Psirathex's enslavement. If Barthag's bugbears join the fray, divide an additional 2,450 XP if the heroes defeat them.



## AREA 2-2 – BARTHAG’S BUGBEARS

*This natural cavern produces an appalling reek. Some of the stench comes from the rotting, half-consumed corpses in one corner and still more of it emanates from vermin-infested sleeping furs.*

**Barthag, bugbear awakened thrall** and her three **charmed bugbear cutthroats** live here. Although cunning, bugbears are relatively dull, and only Barthag, a former chieftain, had enough brains for the awakened thrall process. Psirathex was pleased with the outcome, as the Puppeteer ability it bestowed upon the bugbear increased the offensive potential of its lesser minions.

The bugbears have amassed a small amount of treasure, largely taken from the unfortunate creatures Psirathex has enslaved, experimented on, and then discarded. If the heroes search the area, they find 17 cp, 14 sp, 10 gp, three 50 gp gems, and a *potion of heroism*.

### BARTHAG, BUGBEAR AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil*

**AC:** 17 (chain shirt, shield)

**Hit Points:** 78 (12d8 + 24)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+2)

**Saves:** Dex +4, Con +4

**Skills:** Intimidation +4, Stealth +6, Survival +2

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech, Goblin, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Brute:** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Barthag hits with it (included in the attack).

**Endless Servitude:** Barthag has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of Barthag suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Surprise Attack:** If Barthag surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** Barthag makes two melee attacks.

**Morningstar:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Javelin:** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage in melee or 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage at range.

**Puppeteer (Recharge 5-6):** All charmed creatures within 30 feet of Barthag can make one melee attack.

### CHARMED BUGBEAR CUTTHROAT (3)

*Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil*

**AC:** 14 (hide armor)

**Hit Points:** 44 (8d8 + 8)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

**Skills:** Stealth +6, Survival +2

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages:** Common, Goblin

**Challenge:** 2 (450 XP)

**Brute:** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

**Surprise Attack:** If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** If the bugbear has both shortwords drawn, it can make two shortword attacks.

**Shortsword:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Javelin:** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or ranged 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage in melee or 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage at range.

**Developments.** It is unlikely the heroes encounter the bugbears in their lair; the goblinoids more than likely join

the battle with the stone giants. If a battle does begin here, Psirathex sends in Narghal and his gnolls (area 2-3) 2 rounds after fighting breaks out. It still holds back Kathrak and the hobgoblins (area 2-4), believing they have a better chance to destroy the heroes if given time to prepare for them.

Bugbears freed of Psirathex's enslavement are unlikely to alter their behavior. They are chaotic evil and convincing them to side with the heroes is difficult to say the least. There is a slight chance Barthag listens to the heroes, but she betrays them at the first opportunity. In fact, she may see the benefits of willingly working for the aboleth.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 2,450 XP among the characters if they defeat the bugbears here.

### AREA 2-3 – NARGHAL'S GNOLLS

*This cavern is pitch black and without the glowing lichen that pervades the rest of the area. It smells of an animal den, foul and musky.*

A small group of three **charmed gnoll berserkers** led by a vicious creature named **Narghal, gnoll awakened thrall** live here. Like the bugbears, they have relatively unsophisticated minds, but Narghal's predatory nature did give Psirathex something to work with. The aboleth's tampering endowed the gnoll with the ability to siphon away the psychic energy of charmed creatures and use it to heal his own wounds and gain temporary bonuses in combat.

The gnolls use little in the way of tactics and use Rampage and Reckless to rip into their opponents with sword and fang. Narghal uses Psychic Siphon as often as it recharges to heal his wounds and gain bonuses in combat.

Like the bugbears, the gnolls here have some treasure, scattered about their den. If the heroes search the area, they find 74 sp, 26 gp, and a *potion of greater healing*. Also among the treasure is a gold locket with a portrait of Mira Hearthwright. This once belonged to Jarek Hearthwright and is further proof he found the aboleth's lair and did not survive.

### CHARMED GNOLL BERSERKER (3)

*Medium humanoid (gnoll), chaotic evil*

**AC:** 13 (hide armor)

**Hit Points:** 67 (9d8 + 27)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)

---

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

**Languages:** Gnoll

**Challenge:** 2 (450 XP)

**Rampage:** When the gnoll reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the gnoll can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

**Reckless:** At the start of its turn, the gnoll can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

---

#### ACTIONS

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

**Greatsword:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

### NARGHAL, GNOLL AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (gnoll), chaotic evil*

**AC:** 14 (hide armor)

**Hit Points:** 65 (10d8 + 20)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)

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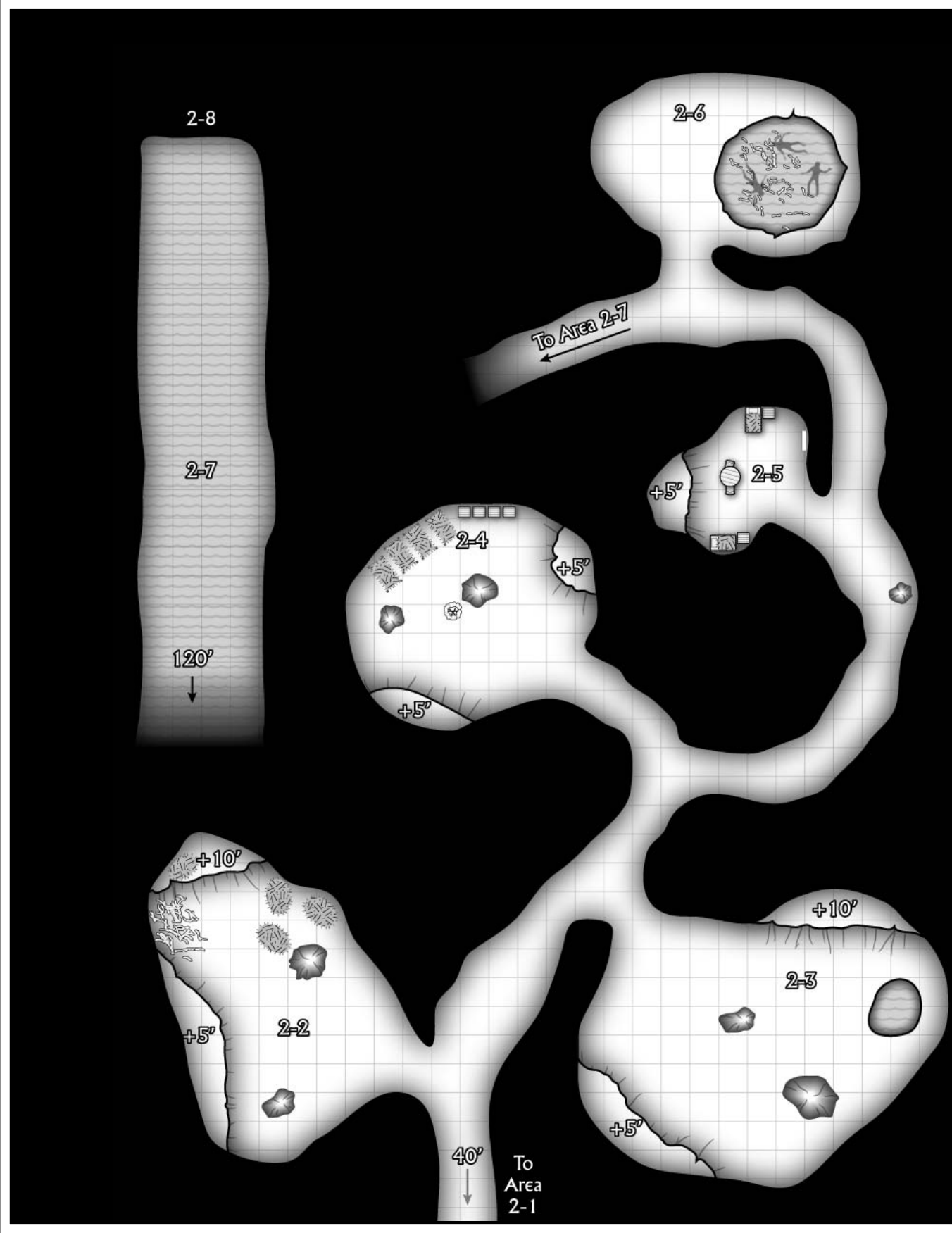
**Saving Throws:** Con +4, Wis +1, Cha +4

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

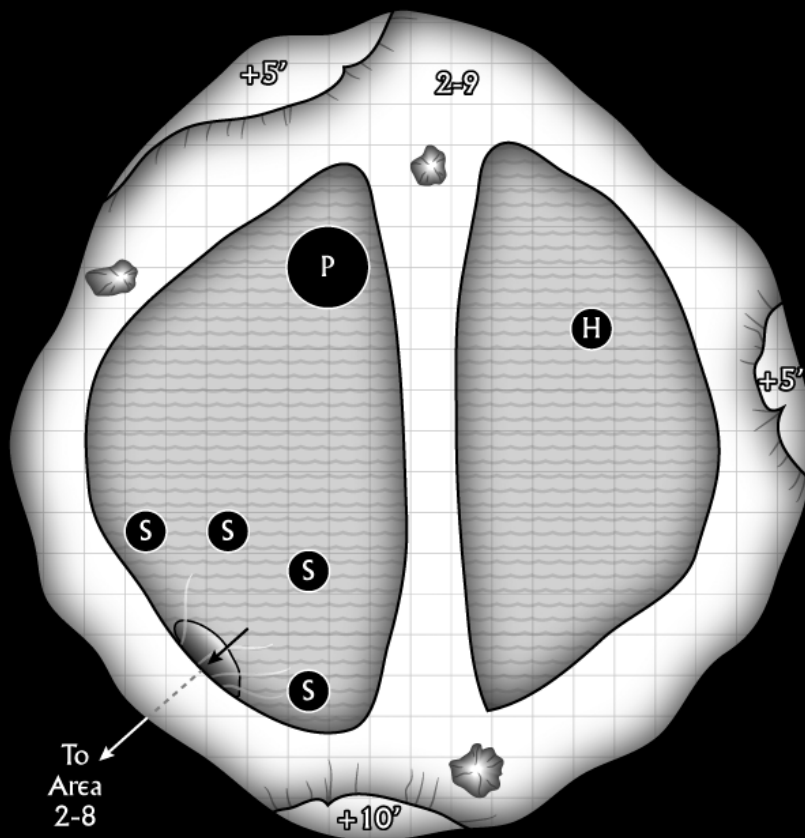
**Languages:** Abyssal, Deep Speech, Gnoll, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Endless Servitude:** Narghal has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60



# The Dark Lake



## Lair of the Aboleth

5 feet	Stalagmite	Hannah Drydale	Skum	Psirathex



feet of Narghal suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Rampage:** When Narghal reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on his turn, he can take a bonus action to move up to half his speed and make a bite attack.

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### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack:** Narghal makes three attacks: one with his bite and two with his claws.

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) poison damage.

**Claw:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

**Psychic Siphon (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, Narghal can drain 10 (3d6) hit points from a charmed creature he can see within 30 feet. Narghal regains hit points equal to the damage the charmed creature takes. If this ability reduces a charmed creature to 0 hit points or below, Narghal can add d4 to his next attack roll or saving throw. Narghal can only benefit from one Psychic Siphon die at a time.

**Development.** The gnolls, like the bugbears, do not alter their course of action if freed from the aboleth's enslavement. Thoroughly evil and savage, they cannot be reasoned with or won to the party's side.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 2,450 XP among the characters if they defeat the gnolls.

## AREA 2-4 – HAZAK'S HOBGOBLINS

*This cavern is neatly organized with bed rolls laid out along one wall, supplies piled neatly in one corner, and an expertly constructed firepit placed at its center. The glowing lichen in the room have been harvested and moved to provide better lighting in some places and no lighting in others.*

The small group of three **charmed hobgoblin veterans** who live in this cavern are organized and well prepared. Psirathex fared better with the hobgoblins than he did with the gnolls and bugbears. Though the rank and file were unfit for the awakening process, their leader, **Hazak, hobgoblin awakened thrall**, is an intelligent and ruthless creature. As an awakened thrall, the hobgoblin war captain has gained a host of potent abilities.

The hobgoblins have posted a sentry near the door and shifted the lighting in the room to best benefit their darkvision. The sentry is in complete darkness, while the rest of the hobgoblins disperse to the shadowy areas of the cavern, taking cover behind large stalagmites in the room. Before battle begins, Hazak casts *blade ward* and *true strike* to make the most out of his first attack, along with Martial Advantage and Perfect Precognition. He uses Leadership in the next round of combat and Perfect Precognition as often as it recharges.

**Kathrak Stoneshield, dwarven awakened thrall** will almost certainly be here as well, bolstering the hobgoblins with his own martial prowess. Kathrak is a fearsome dwarven warrior, and Psirathex's augmentations have made him even more formidable. He can all upon an array of psionic abilities to unleash upon his foes. He uses Telekinetic Charge in melee as often as possible and *true strike* against hard targets like fighters.

The hobgoblins have been allowed to keep the bulk of the treasure they've acquired from the aboleth's victims, and as such, have a modest hoard consisting of 900 sp, 50 gp, and a *potion of climbing*.

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### CHARMED HOBGOBLIN VETERAN (3)

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*Medium humanoid (goblinoid), lawful evil*

**AC:** 17 (splint)

**Hit Points:** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

---

**Skills:** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** Common, Goblin, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 3 (700 XP)

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**Martial Advantage:** Once per turn, the hobgoblin can deal an extra 10 damage (3d6) to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the hobgoblin that isn't incapacitated.

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### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack:** The hobgoblin makes two longsword attacks.

**Longsword:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Heavy Crossbow:** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

## HAZAK, HOBGOBLIN AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (goblinoid), lawful evil*

**AC:** 20 (plate, shield)

**Hit Points:** 65 (10d8 + 20)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws:** Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +5

**Skills:** Athletics +6, Perception +3

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech, Goblin, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Endless Servitude:** Hazak has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of Hazak suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics):** Hazak's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: *mage hand, resistance*
- 3/day each: *blade ward, true strike, vicious mockery*

**Martial Advantage:** Once per turn, Hazak can deal an extra 14 damage (4d6) to a creature he hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the hobgoblin that isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** Hazak makes two melee attacks. Alternately, he can make two ranged attacks with his javelins.

**Longsword:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8

(1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Shield Bash:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Javelin:** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest):** For 1 minute, Hazak can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature he can see within 30 feet of him makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand Hazak. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Hazak is incapacitated.

**Perfect Precognition (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, Hazak catches a quick glimpse of the future. He gains advantage and scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on his next attack roll.

## KATHRAK STONESHIELD, DWARVEN AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral good*

**AC:** 18 (chain mail, shield)

**Hit Points:** 120 (16d8 + 48)

**Speed:** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws:** Str +6, Con +6

**Skills:** Athletics +6, Intimidate +4, Perception +5

**Damage Resistances:** poison

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarvish, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Dwarven Resilience:** Kathrak has advantage on saving throws against poison.

**Endless Servitude:** Kathrak has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of Kathrak suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.



**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics):** Kathrak's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: *mage hand*, *resistance*
- 3/day each: *blade ward*, *true strike*, *vicious mockery*

**Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest):** As a bonus action, Kathrak can regain 20 hit points.

---

### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack:** Kathrak makes three attacks with his battleaxe.

**Battleaxe:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

**Telekinetic Charge (Recharge 5-6):** Kathrak can use a bonus action to imbue his next ranged or melee attack with extra kinetic force. If the attack roll is successful, the target takes an additional 7 (2d6) force damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Developments.** Unlike Psirathex's more savage thralls, if one or more hobgoblins are freed from the aboleth's enslavement (especially if the party frees Hazak), they may be amenable to negotiations. Particularly persuasive and morally flexible heroes might even convince Hazak to agree to a short-term alliance. The prideful hobgoblin is furious at serving the aboleth against his will, and might join the characters against Psirathex. If freed from enslavement, Kathrak may have serious reservation about joining forces with the hobgoblins.

If the party manages to end Kathrak's enslavement, they have won a huge victory. Kathrak immediately breaks off attacks in an attempt to take stock of the situation (or attacks the nearest hobgoblin). He is confused but not hostile to the heroes if they do not act aggressively. He has no memory of what has transpired, but once the heroes fill him in, he pledges his axe to their cause.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 6,800 XP among the characters if they defeat the hobgoblins and free or defeat Kathrak Stoneshield. Do not award XP for Kathrak Stoneshield if the heroes use lethal blows against him.



## AREA 2-5 – KATHRAK'S CAVE

*This small cavern does not seem like the lair of a monster. Instead it is a well-lit and neatly organized living quarters complete with a pair of braziers, two straw beds, a small table and chairs, and a rack and shelves for foodstuffs and other belongings.*

Kathrak Stoneshield lives here, and Psirathex has allowed him to make himself as comfortable as possible. It is unlikely the party encounters the dwarven warrior here, as he almost certainly joins the hobgoblins in their cavern (area 2-4) to fight the heroes.

If Uther Drydale escaped after the encounter in Drydale, he is in this area and may factor into any battles within the lair. Like Kathrak, Uther joins the party if freed from Psirathex's enslavement. It should be noted that under no circumstance will Kathrak attack Uther, or vice versa, if one of them is freed from enslavement and the other is not.

Kathrak has a small store of treasure here. Though these are his personal items, he may be willing to share with newfound allies. The dwarven warrior has the following: 210 sp, 90 gp, a *potion of frost giant strength*, and a *potion of superior healing*.

## AREA 2-6 – DROWNING IN THE DEAD

*This cavern holds a small pool or cistern. The water is an unhealthy shade of gray and exudes a powerful stench. Bodies and pieces of bodies float in the muck.*

This large cavern contains a cistern Psirathex uses to dispose of corpses and other refuse, including its failed experiments. The top of the cistern is clogged with corpses, but if the party moves closer to the pool, they notice a blue glow emanating from the depths. This is *Kegsplitter*, a powerful magical battleaxe (functions as a *sword of sharpness*) dropped by one of Psirathex's victims, a citizen of Drydale and former adventurer named Jarek Hearthwright. If the heroes accepted the quest from Mira Hearthwright, they should be on the lookout for the axe.

Retrieving *Kegsplitter* is no easy task. It lies at the bottom of the cistern, some 60 feet below the surface. The top 10 feet of water is choked with bodies, and swimming past them on the way down and then again on the way up is dangerous in the extreme.

Any hero wishing to give it a go must make a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to get past the bodies. On a failed check, the hero makes no progress but is still submerged. In addition, add +1 to the difficulty to the next Strength (Athletics) check as character becomes tangled in corpses. If a character makes it past the bodies, getting to the bottom to retrieve the axe is not difficult, but he must repeat the whole process of swimming past the tangle of corpses at the top on his way up.

Additionally, a trio of **giant slime eels**, drawn up from the depths by a ready source of food, have made their burrows in the walls of the cistern. Each eel can reach up to 10 feet from its burrow to attack creature that reach the bottom.

*Kegsplitter* provides bright illumination at the bottom of the cistern.

## GIANT SLIME EEL (3)

*Large beast, unaligned*

**AC:** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 68 (8d10 + 24)

**Speed:** 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)

---

**Skills:** Perception +2, Stealth +3

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** –

**Challenge:** 3 (700 XP)

---

**Slime:** When a creature targets the eel with a melee attack, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw before the attack is made or suffer disadvantage on the attack roll.

**Water Breathing:** The eel can breathe only under water.

### ACTIONS

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**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also paralyzed while poisoned in this way. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

*This massive eel is coated in a slick layer of translucent slime that clouds the water around it. Its eyes are huge and moon-like, befitting a creature that dwells in constant darkness, and a forest of bone-white needles fill its long, narrow jaws.*

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 3,900 XP among the characters if they navigate the corpse-choked cistern and defeat or drive off the giant slime eels.

## AREA 2-7 – A LONG, WET WALK

*The tunnel, though spacious, has begun to fill with water. At first it climbs to your knees, then your waist, until you face a long, wet slog through the increasingly foul-smelling water. The glowing lichen is everywhere in this tunnel, painting twisted, writhing shadows against the walls.*

This long, half-submerged tunnel leads from the chambers designed for terrestrial creatures to the aquatic lair of Psirathex. The tunnel is difficult terrain for Medium creatures without a swim speed, and Small creatures are forced to swim or find some other way to navigate the tunnel, such as a raft or even riding on the shoulders of an ally.

Psirathex trusts the guarding of this area, the entrance to his inner sanctum, to creatures it can fully rely on. That means creatures loyal to it without use of its Enslave ability. Two **skum brutes** and three **skum** attack the heroes as they travel down this tunnel. As aquatic creatures, they use the water as cover and attempt to surprise the heroes.

The skum brutes use Caustic Glob from range in the opening round and then attempt to bite and swallow their foes. The common skum engage targets in melee, focusing on those restrained by the skum brutes' Caustic Glob when possible. The skum do not fight to the death here. Instead, they flee once the heroes reduce their numbers by half. The survivors then wait for the characters in the sunken tunnel ahead.



## SKUM BRUTE (2)

*Large humanoid (skum), lawful evil*

**AC:** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 85 (10d10 + 30)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

---

**Skills:** Perception +3, Stealth +3

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages:** Deep Speech

**Challenge:** 4 (1,100 XP)

---

**Amphibious:** The skum can breathe air and water.

**Eternal Servant:** The skum is considered charmed by the aboleth it serves, as described under the aboleth's Enslave ability. The skum can, however, still take reactions and the charmed condition cannot be ended by any means.

---

### ACTIONS

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the skum can't bite another target.

**Swallow:** The skum makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the skum, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the skum's turns. The skum can have only one target swallowed at a time.

If the skum takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the skum must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 5 feet of the skum. If the skum dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

**Caustic Glob (Recharge 5-6):** The skum brute spits a glob of acidic mucus, targeting one creature that it can

see within 60 feet of it. The target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 14 (4d6) acid damage. Unless the target avoids taking any acid damage, it is restrained. A restrained creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength saving throw to free itself.

*This towering fish-like humanoid has a gaping maw lined with needle-like teeth. Its arms are stunted, almost vestigial, as if to make room for its massive head and jaws.*

### SKUM (3)

*Medium humanoid (skum), lawful evil*

**AC:** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

---

**Skills:** Perception +2

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** Deep Speech

**Challenge:** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious:** The skum can breathe air and water.

**Eternal Servant:** The skum is considered charmed by the aboleth it serves, as described under the aboleth's Enslave ability. The skum can, however, still take reactions and the charmed condition cannot be ended by any means.

**Regeneration:** The skum regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

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#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The skum makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

**Claws:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target suffers an additional 11 (2d6 + 4) damage.

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 3,550 XP among the characters if they defeat the skum.

## AREA 2-8 – DEEP DIVE

*The tunnel ends in a bare rock wall, though a sluggish current swirls around your feet and seems to go under the wall. It appears the way through is actually the way beneath.*

To get to Psirathex's lake, the heroes must swim through a submerged tunnel. The tunnel surfaces in the lake, putting the heroes at immediate risk. It takes a character with a movement speed of 30 feet and no swim speed or magical enhancement 3 minutes to reach the other side if all they do is swim. Characters must hold their breath while swimming, and most should have enough breath to reach the other side without difficulty.

Any skum that escaped from the previous encounter wait for the heroes here. Their tactics are simple: engage the heroes long enough so they drown.

## AREA 2-9 – THE LURKER IN THE DARK LAKE

*This massive chamber is dominated by vast pool of black water. A natural stone bridge spans the pool, and the ceiling soars upward some 60 feet.*

This small underground lake is **Psirathex's** inner sanctum, and it lurks beneath the dark glassy surface. The natural stone bridge that runs the length of the pool is 5 feet wide. The glowing lichen in this area provides dim illumination to the entire space.

In addition to the aboleth, its current favorite minion, **Hannah Drydale, human awakened thrall**, and four **skum** lurk here. Hannah has been affected by Psirathex's Mucous Cloud and is beneath the water with her master.

When the party arrives, they will be submerged, entering through a tunnel beneath the surface of the lake. The skum attack the characters in melee immediately, while they are at a disadvantage. Psirathex will not join melee with the entire party at this point. The aboleth wants to take the heroes' measure and weaken them before it risks its own life. Instead it uses its *telekinesis* lair action to pull one character close to it, subjecting the unfortunate hero to its Mucous Cloud and all its melee attacks. Hannah Drydale targets the heroes with spells while they are in the water, using *bold person* and *telekinesis* to make them easier targets or separate weaker heroes from the group.

If the characters flee the water for the shore, Psirathex surfaces and attempts to use its Enslave ability on one of the heroes, targeting potent melee characters over spell-

casters. It also uses a lair action to cast *telekinesis* to pull heroes back into the water where they are at a severe disadvantage. If one of the heroes is charmed, the aboleth immediately sets the character on his or her companions.

The aboleth knows there is a chance Hannah could break free from its enslavement, so it tries to keep her out of melee. If she is freed from its control, she joins the characters against Psirathex, especially if Kathrak is already among them. The aboleth generally avoids melee against more than one character at a time, and it uses its legendary action to move (submerge) out of harm's way when it can. If the skum are killed and Hannah freed or neutralized, or if it takes damage equal to half its starting hit points, Psirathex dives to the bottom of its pool, 30 feet down, forcing the characters to dive in after it and end the threat once and for all.

Kathrak will not attack Hannah under any circumstance, though, while charmed, she attacks him when the opportunity presents itself.

The aboleth has amassed quite a hoard at the bottom of its pool. The characters find: 800 cp, 7,000 sp, 2,200 gp, 90 pp, seven 50 gp gems, a *cloak of elvenkind*, and a +2 *longsword*.

## LAIR ACTIONS

When fighting in its lair, Psirathex can draw on the ambient psionic energy to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the aboleth takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- Psirathex casts *telekinesis* (no components required, spellcasting ability is Intelligence) on any creature it can see within 60 feet of it. While maintaining concentration on this effect, the aboleth can't take other lair actions.
- One creature charmed by Psirathex within 60 feet that it can see releases a nimbus of damaging psionic energy. All creatures hostile to Psirathex within 20 feet take 14 (4d6) psychic damage and are stunned for 1 round. A successful DC 14 Wisdom saving throw reduces the damage by half and the target is not stunned.

## PSIRATHEX

*Large aberration, lawful evil*

**AC:** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 135 (18d10 + 36)

**Speed:** 10 ft., swim 40 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

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**Saving Throws:** Con +6, Int +8, Wis +6

**Skills:** History +12, Perception +10

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages:** Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge:** 10 (5,900 XP)

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**Amphibious:** Psirathex can breathe air and water.

**Mucous Cloud:** While underwater, Psirathex is surrounded by transformative mucus. A creature that touches the aboleth or that hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature is diseased for 1d4 hours. The diseased creature can breathe only underwater.

**Probing Telepathy:** If a creature communicates telepathically with Psirathex, the aboleth learns the creature's greatest desires if the aboleth can see the creature.

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## ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** Psirathex makes three melee attacks. It can use any combination of tentacle, blade tentacle, and tail attacks.

**Tentacle: Melee Weapon Attack:** +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The disease has no effect for 1 minute and can be removed by any magic that cures disease. After 1 minute, the diseased creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater, and the disease can be removed only by *heal* or another disease-curing spell of 6th level or higher.



When the creature is outside a body of water, it takes 6 (1d12) acid damage every 10 minutes unless moisture is applied to the skin before 10 minutes have passed.

**Blade Tentacle:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage. Psirathex scores a critical hit on this attack on any roll of 18, 19, or 20.

**Tail:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft. one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

**Enslave (3/Day):** Psirathex targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by Psirathex until the aboleth dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under Psirathex's control and can't take reactions, and the aboleth and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance.

Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the aboleth.

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#### LEGENDDARY ACTIONS

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Psirathex can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The aboleth regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Move:** Psirathex moves up to its swim speed.

**Mucous Spray (Costs 2 Actions):** Psirathex targets one creature it can see within 60 feet or two creatures within range that are within 5 feet of one another. A target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution save or suffers the effects of the aboleth's Mucous Cloud.

**Puppet Master:** One creature charmed by Psirathex that it can see moves up to its speed and makes a weapon attack against a target the aboleth designates.

*The aboleth is a creature drawn from a madman's nightmare. Its outline is fish-like, but the squirming tentacles and the baleful three-lobed eye that burns in its misshapen head speak of something not of this reality. The water around the horror has thickened into a vile effluvium, and two of its tentacles end in long, serrated blades.*

## HANNAH DRYDALE, HUMAN AWAKENED THRALL

*Medium humanoid (human), neutral good*

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**AC:** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points:** 49 (9d8 + 9)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

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**Saving Throws:** Int +6, Wis +4

**Skills:** Arcana +6, History +6

**Senses:** passive Perception 11

**Languages:** Common, Deep Speech, Dwarvish, Elvish, telepathy 60 ft.

**Challenge:** 5 (1,800 XP)

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**Endless Servitude:** Hannah has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of Hannah suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics):** Hannah's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: *mage hand, resistance*
- 3/day each: *blade ward, true strike, vicious mockery*

**Spellcasting:** Hannah is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, prestidigitation, ray of frost*
  - 1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb, expeditious retreat, mage armor*
  - 2nd level (3 slots): *alter self, hold person, knock*
  - 3rd level (3 slots): *blink, fireball, slow*
  - 4th level (3 slots): *polymorph, stoneskin*
  - 5th level (1 slot): *telekinesis*
- 

#### ACTIONS

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**Quarterstaff:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

**Enslave (1/Day):** Hannah targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by Psirathex until it dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the aboleth's control and can't take reactions, and Psirathex and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance.

Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from Psirathex.

## SKUM (4)

*Medium humanoid (skum), lawful evil*

**AC:** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points:** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed:** 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Skills:** Perception +2

**Senses:** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** Deep Speech

**Challenge:** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious:** The skum can breathe air and water.

**Eternal Servant:** The skum is considered charmed by the aboleth it serves, as described under the aboleth's Enslave ability. The skum can, however, still take reactions and the charmed condition cannot be ended by any means.

**Regeneration:** The skum regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The skum makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

**Claws:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target suffers an additional 11 (2d6 + 4) damage.

**Bite:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide 9,500 XP among the characters if they defeat Psirathex, the skum, and free or defeat Hannah Drydale. Do not award XP for Hannah Drydale if the heroes use lethal blows against her.

# CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters destroy Psirathex, they have ended a terrible threat to the region. If unchecked, the aboleth might have enslaved the entire town of Drydale. If the PCs return with Kathrak Stoneshield and Hannah Drydale, they are lauded as heroes by the town. In addition to a hefty reward in coin offered by the town elders, Kathrak Stoneshield and Hannah Drydale wish to reward the party and offer up one magic item each. This should be a rare magic item appropriate to the adventurer's skills and the party's level.

If the heroes manage to destroy Psirathex but both townsfolk are killed in the process, the town is grateful and reward the characters as promised, but they are not as enthusiastic. The characters overhear grumbles about "should have done more" and "bloodthirsty mercenaries" whenever they set foot in Drydale.

If, for some reason, the heroes only wounded Psirathex, the aboleth lies low for a while, and once properly healed begins collecting more minions. This time, however, the aberration has a more straightforward goal: destroy the town of Drydale and everyone in it. Should this happen, Kathrak Stoneshield or Hannah Drydale may contact the heroes to set right what they failed to do the first time.

**Awarding Experience.** Divide an additional 6,000 XP among the characters if they manage to rescue both Kathrak Stoneshield and Hannah Drydale. Award 3,000 XP if they only rescue one of the wayward adventurers. Additionally, award another 3,000 XP if the characters return *Kegsplitter* to Mira Hearthwright.



# APPENDIX – NEW TEMPLATE

## ABOLETH AWAKENED THRALL TEMPLATE

All aboleths have the ability to enslave virtually any creature, turning the hapless victim into an unwilling minion. While many aboleths are satisfied with charming creatures of all sorts to guard their lairs or do their bidding, treating them as cannon fodder, other aboleths take a more focused interest in their slaves. Through a bizarre and ghoulish combination of surgery and psychic manipulation, an aboleth can “improve” its minions by unlocking latent psionic abilities in the creature. This process has the additional benefit of making the creature more susceptible to the aboleth’s Enslave ability and less likely to break free of it.

**Favored Minions:** Often, awakened thralls are an aboleth’s favored minions, chosen because they offered some skill or ability useful to the aberration. The process of turning a creature into an awakened thrall is long and difficult, even for a creature with an aboleth’s vast intellect. Still, the process creates potent servants, especially when the creature already possessed significant abilities of its own. Generally, creatures with higher Intelligence scores are chosen for the awakened thrall process, as their greater intellect allows the aboleth to bestow greater powers.

**Ability Scores:** The awakened thrall’s Charisma score increases by 2 and its Wisdom score decreases by 2.

**Languages:** The awakened thrall learns Deep Speech and gains telepathy out to 60 feet.

**Challenge:** Recalculate the creature’s CR considering its damage-per-round, AC, and effective AC may increase from Innate Spellcasting or Telekinetic Charge.

**Empowered Servitude:** The awakened thrall can only use the traits and actions described below when it is charmed by the aboleth that created it.

**Endless Servitude:** The awakened thrall has disadvantage on all Wisdom saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition. In addition, all charmed creatures within 60 feet of the awakened thrall suffer disadvantage on saving throws to resist or remove the charmed condition.

**Innate Spellcasting (Psionics):** An awakened thrall with an Intelligence ability score of 12 or higher gains this trait. The awakened thrall’s innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *mage hand, resistance*
- 3/day each: *blade ward, true strike, vicious mockery*

**The Master’s Gift:** The awakened thrall gains one of the following actions:

- **New Action: Enslave (1/Day):** The awakened thrall targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC = 8 + the awakened thrall’s proficiency bonus + the awakened thrall’s Charisma modifier) or be magically charmed by the aboleth who created the awakened thrall until the aboleth dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the aboleth’s control and can’t take reactions, and the aboleth and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance.

Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the aboleth.

- **New Action: Perfect Precognition (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, the awakened thrall catches a quick glimpse of the future. It gains advantage and scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on its next attack roll.
- **New Action: Psychic Siphon (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, the awakened thrall can drain 10 (3d6) hit points from a charmed creature it can see within 30 feet. The awakened thrall regains hit points equal to the damage the charmed creature takes. If this ability reduces a charmed creature to 0 hit points or below, the awakened thrall can add d4 to its next attack roll or saving throw. The awakened thrall can only benefit from one Psychic Siphon die at a time.
- **New Action: Puppeteer (Recharge 5-6):** All charmed creatures within 30 feet of the awakened thrall can make one melee attack.
- **New Action: Telekinetic Charge (Recharge 5-6):** The awakened thrall can use a bonus action to imbue its next ranged or melee attack with extra kinetic force. If the attack roll is successful, the target takes an additional 7 (2d6) force damage and must succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC = 8 + the awakened thrall’s proficiency bonus + the awakened thrall’s Strength modifier) or be knocked prone. If the attacking creature is size Large, it deals an additional 10 (3d6) force damage; if it is size Huge, it deals an additional 14 (4d6) force damage.

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