

MONSTERS' GUIDE TO COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

*For Dungeon of the Mad Mage
Level 1: Dungeon Level*

by Ruslan Kim



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About this Guide

Combat is one of three main pillars of the game, apart from exploration and interaction. And it takes a lot of time to prepare and run good combat encounter. The goal of this guide is to help DMs who are running Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage adventure to get better understanding how to run combat encounters, how to make them coherent, memorable and fun!

Preparation process divided into 3 steps:

1. Determining Encounter Difficulty.
2. Determining Surprise.
3. Determining Creatures' Tactics.

First step will give you general understanding about how difficult combat encounter could be for your player characters. Each level of WDMM is designed for PCs of particular level. I use a guideline from Encounter Building section in Xanathar's Guide to Everything (XGE, p. 88) to evaluate how many PCs of corresponding level should be in the party to overcome the encounter. Math is simple. If you have the same number of PCs – it is good fight. If you have more PCs (2/3 of number of PCs is needed) – they will pass it with ease, but it still be challenging. If you have less PCs (3/2 of number of PCs is needed) – encounter will be hard, but still winnable. Also, I put notes about combat difficulty, which I think is important. Depending on this information you can adjust the encounter for your group, skip it entirely or think about possible defeat consequences.

Second step is always up to DM, so you should be prepared in advance. General guidance is written in Player's Handbook (PHB, p. 189). Basically, you should determine who is surprised when the first round of combat begins. To do so, you should know answers for these questions:

Are creatures trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to PC's Passive Perception score.

Are PCs trying to hide? They roll Stealth.

Are they successful? Compare results to creatures' Passive Perception score.

Based on the results you will understand who will take actions in the first round of combat and who will not. I also put my notes for the encounters when circumstances may differ from the standard procedure.

Third step will help you to understand how to use creatures in combat. Where should they stand? What course of action will be most efficient and logical depending on the lore? Who do they need to attack? Will they fight to the death? Will they flee or surrender? I also put more detailed explanation on how some creature's abilities and traits work.

Abbreviations and Font Styles

The following abbreviations are used throughout this guide:

PHB = Player's Handbook

MM = Monster Manual

DMG = Dungeon Master's Guide

SCAG = Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide

XGE = Xanathar's Guide to Everything

VGTM = Volo's Guide to Monsters

MTOF = Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes

WDMM = Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage

WDH = Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

PC(s) = Player Character(s)

AC = Armor Class

DC = Difficulty Class

CR = Challenge Rating

hp = hit points

gp = gold piece(s)

AoE = Area of Effect

RAW = Rules as Written

The following font styles are used throughout this guide:

Bold style is used for the creatures' names

Italic style is used for the Spells.

Bold Italic style is used for the Abilities and Traits.

Level 1: Dungeon Level

This level is designed for four 5th level PCs. If you have more than 4 PCs, you can add more creatures to make combat encounters more challenging. If you have less PCs, then you can decrease the number of creatures in combat or use less optimal tactics. All creatures in Encounter Difficulty section are compared to 5th level PCs.

Area 1

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Bandit** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This **Bandit** is not going to fight, but since PCs have an opportunity to notice his presence, combat encounter may occur here. This encounter is very easy but could be followed by the harder one.

Surprise

The **Bandit** is not going to fight, so he won't surprise anyone. Use the standard procedure to determine if PCs can surprise the **Bandit**.

Creatures' Tactics

As intelligent creature, bandit can negotiate, flee or surrender.

According to the book, the **Bandit** is hidden behind the secret door and PCs can notice his presence with successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. It means that he doesn't need to roll Stealth. If they spot him, roll Initiative and let PCs do whatever they want in initiative order, so it will be easier for you to track all their actions. Secret door could be found with the same DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check that is needed to spot the **Bandit**. Since PCs starts from 5th level, they might have *Knock* spell to open the door, *Gaseous Form* to move through the hole or *Misty Step* to teleport behind it. The **Bandit** should spend his Action to use Dash and move to Area 6a. It is 80 ft. away from the secret door to Area 1, so it will take minimum 2 rounds for the **Bandit** to reach Area 6a. It is up to DM if sounds of the

battle, *Knock* spell or **Bandit's** scream will bring attention of other creatures who are residing in Area 6c and 6d. If you decide so, they could reach Area 6a in 2 rounds and the corridor connecting Area 6a and Area 1 in 3 rounds. See their tactics below at the respective area's descriptions.

Area 2b

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Intellect Devourers** (CR 2, MM, p. 191) = 2 PCs

2 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 1 PC

Note. These creatures are not going to fight.

Surprise

According to the book, these creatures are not going to surprise PCs. It is impossible for PCs to surprise this group because of **Intellect Devourer's Detect Sentience** ability.

Creatures' Tactics

Mechanically, there are 4 creatures, but from roleplaying perspective there are just two **Intellect Devourers** inside **Bugbears'** bodies. There is not so much information about **Intellect Devourer's** tactics from the lore point of view. Apart of Monster Manual, you can find some additional information about this creature in published books (WDH, p. 212 and VGTM, p. 77) but there are no clues of how it fights. **Intellect Devourers** have alien intelligence, so it is up to DM if they will negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

According to the book, PCs with Passive Perception scores higher than **Bugbears'** Stealth roll could notice hiding or fleeing creatures. Note, that the **Bugbears** are able to see PCs from 60 ft. distance thanks to their *Darkvision*. If PCs are using light sources, then the **Bugbears** can notice them from 70 ft. when they enter Area 2a.

If PCs noticed the **Bugbears** and you want them to flee, take a look to Chases rules (DMG, p. 252). If you want them to fight, then use *Morningstar* and focus on less-armored PCs within reach.

According to the book, **Intellect Devourer** appears right after **Bugbear's** death and act at the same initiative count. **Intellect Devourer's Multiattack** includes **Devour Intellect** action. From mechanical perspective it is represented just as Intellect saving throw and it is up to you how to describe this attack to your players. It may look as telepathic blast or some kind of hypnosis. **Devour Intellect** may inflict almost permanent Stunned condition (PHB, p. 292) because 5th level PCs usually don't have access to *Greater Restoration* spell. It is especially dangerous for PCs with low Intelligence score. Stunned condition includes Incapacitated condition and allows the **Devourer** to use **Body Theft** next round after successful **Devour Intellect**. If PC will die because of **Body Thief** ability *Revivify* and even *Raise Dead* spells will not work, since they don't restore any missing body parts. The easiest way to bring PC back to life is *Resurrection* spell which is available for bards and clerics at level 13 earliest. Note, that **Body Theft** can be performed even in one round, if several **Devourers** focus on one target.

Area 3

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Psychic Gray Ooze** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 243, with changes) = 1 PC

Note. This **Gray Ooze** has optional **Psychic Crush** ability. It is an interesting way to present Undermountain augmented creature, but some DM's ruling is needed.

Surprise

The **Gray Ooze** is unnoticeable thanks to its **False Appearance** trait. It means that the **Ooze** can surprise PCs automatically and PCs don't have such opportunity.

Creatures' Tactics

According to the lore, oozes are unintelligent spawns of Demon Lord Jubilex. They don't use any tactics, they don't surrender or flee, they just attack everything they can eat.

If you decide that the **Grey Ooze** can use **Psychic Crush** ability being motionless, then it will be unnoticeable thanks to **False Appearance**. In this case, the party could have hard time to understand what's going on and how to react accordingly. If you decide that the **Grey Ooze** can't benefit from **False Appearance** trait while it uses **Psychic Crush**, then the **Ooze** will have hard time. **Psychic Crush** is the only ranged attack option available for the **Ooze** and it is recharge-dependent ability. The **Ooze** also has no swim speed which means it is limited to 5 ft. movement per round and it won't be able to attack anyone out of this distance. You can make this combat encounter less complicated if the **Ooze** will not use **Psychic Crush** at all. Instead, make it stay motionless near the statue until PC approaches to its melee range and then attack with **Pseudopod**. Note, that the **Gray Ooze** is Invisible (PHB, p. 291) underwater, so it has Advantage to attack rolls. Target PC wearing metal armor. You probably won't be able to kill 5th level PC, but you can make his or her armor less useful. Don't forget that **Corrode Metal** trait can damage weapons.

Area 5

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Grells** (CR 3, MM, p. 172) = 4 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Grells are flying ambushers, who attacks everything small enough to grab, paralyze, take away and eat. They are intelligent enough to flee and PCs can even communicate with them under effect of the *Tongues* spell.

With 30 ft. fly speed and 10 ft. reach the **Grells** probably will be able to reach and attack nearest PCs starting round 1. **Tentacles** attack is pretty nasty. If it hits, it automatically inflicts Grappled and Restrained conditions and potentially

Poisoned and Paralyzed (PHB, p. 290-292). Restrained condition grants Advantage to all **Grell's** attack rolls and Paralyzed condition automatically turns hits into Critical hits. It is optimal for the **Grell** to attack only one target at a time. It can drag Grappled victim out of melee reach without speed penalty. Ceiling in this room is 50 ft. high, as mentioned in Undermountain Overview chapter.

Area 6a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Doppelgangers** (CR 3, MM, p. 82) = 4 PCs
1 **Bandit Captain** (CR 2, MM, p. 344) = 1 PC
7 **Bandits** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter occurs only if **Bandit** from Area 1 had warned other Undertakers. According to the book, they want 10 gp toll.

Surprise

These creatures want to talk so they are not going to surprise PCs. Use standard procedure to determine if PCs can surprise these creatures.

Creatures' Tactics

As intelligent creatures the Undertakers can flee, negotiate, surrender or take captives.

Put the **Bandit Captain** and the **Doppelgangers** to the frontline because they are better in melee and more durable than the **Bandits**. Save some space between them because at 5th level PCs has access to nasty AoE spells like *Fireball* and *Hypnotic Pattern*.

Make the **Bandit Captain** and the **Doppelgangers** use *Multiattack* and try to focus-fire less armored PCs. Don't forget that the **Bandit Captain** can use *Parry* once per round as Reaction to avoid some damage from melee attacks.

Spread the **Bandits** across the room at the second line. Their *Crossbow* attacks are more effective damage wise and range wise, so they don't need to be at the frontline. The **Bandits** are smart enough to focus-fire less armored PCs.

Area 6c

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Doppelganger** (CR 3, MM, p. 82) = 2 PC
1 **Bandit Captain** (CR 2, MM, p. 344) = 1 PC
2 **Bandits** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter occurs if the **Bandit** from Area 1 didn't warn his allies and PCs was careful enough not to do it themselves.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Follow the tactics described at [Area 6a](#) section.

According to WDMM, if the **Bandit Captain** takes damage or sees any of his underlings killed, he retreats to Area 7. The others flee to Area 8 and team up with any Undertakers remaining there.

Area 6d

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Doppelganger** (CR 3, MM, p. 82) = 2 PCs
4 **Bandits** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter occurs if the **Bandit** from Area 1 didn't warn his allies and PCs was careful enough not to do it themselves.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that at the first round of the combat encounter surprised **Bandits** could still be asleep (at least until their first turn starts, but it is up to DM) which means that they are Prone and Unconscious (PHB, p. 272). All attacks from 5 ft. will have Advantage and all hits become Critical hits. Also, they will fail all Strength and Dexterity saves automatically.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 6a](#).

Area 8a

Encounter Difficulty

- 1 **Flesh Golem** (CR 5, MM, p. 169) = 5 PCs
- 1 **Doppelganger** (CR 3, MM, p. 82) = 2 PCs
- 1 **Bandit Captain** (CR 2, MM, p. 344) = 1 PC
- 5 **Bandits** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This combat encounter occurs only if PCs were too loud or if the bandits from Area 6 reached this area in search of reinforcement. It could be very tough fight for the party, especially if weapon-dependent PCs don't have magical or adamantine weapons yet. According to the book, the Undertakers demand 10 gp toll but it is up to DM how would they react if PCs killed their allies from Area 6.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Golems are elemental spirits bound into material form by powerful magic. They blindly obey any commands given them by their creators, don't feel pain and don't afraid of death. They won't communicate, flee or surrender. When its body is heavily damaged the spirit tries to break free and a golem goes berserk.

Fire damage decreases the **Golem's** combat effectiveness a lot because of **Aversion of Fire** trait. Focus on PCs who deal fire damage. If the **Golem** goes **Berserk** and several creatures are at the same range, you could roll a die to determine random target.

Tactics for the **Bandit Captain**, the **Bandits** and the **Doppelganger** is described at [Area 6a](#) section.

According to the book, the **Bandit Captain** will flee to Area 7 when the **Golem's Berserk** activates.

Area 8b

Encounter Difficulty

- 1 **Flesh Golem** (CR 5, MM, p. 169) = 5 PCs
- 1 **Bandit Captain** (CR 2, MM, p. 344) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter may take place if PCs was careful enough during their way through Undertakers' base.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that at the first round of the combat encounter, surprised **Bandit Captain** could still be asleep (at least until her first turn starts, but it is up to DM) which means that she is Prone and Unconscious (PHB, p. 272).

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 8a](#).

Area 8c

Encounter Difficulty

- 1 **Doppelganger** (CR 3, MM, p. 82) = 2 PCs
- 5 **Bandits** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 343) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter may take place if PCs was good enough at Stealth during their way through Undertakers' base.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 6a](#).

Area 14b

Encounter Difficulty

- 1 **Sahuagin Baron** (CR 5, MM, p. 264) = 5 PCs

Note. This **Sahuagin Baron** lacks **Trident** attack, so he deals less damage per round and doesn't have ranged attack options at all.

Surprise

As a DM, you can rule that reverting **Sahuagin Baron** makes party surprised. It is also up to DM, if PCs can surprise petrified **Sahuagin Baron** somehow.

Creatures' Tactics

According to MM, sahuagin are predatory race who think of themselves as of rulers of the ocean depths. To hunt other creatures is just a sport for them. Smell of fresh blood drives them frenzy. Barons are one of the most powerful creatures of sahuagin kind. They are intelligent, so it is up to DM if there is a possibility for surrender or negotiations.

The **Baron's Blood Frenzy** ability grants him Advantage for all melee attacks against wounded target. So, it is optimal for him to use **Multiattack** against PC who started the combat encounter with less than maximum hit points. It is up to DM if the **Baron** can realize this fact. PHB suggests that PCs above half of hp maximum usually don't show signs of injury (PHB, p. 197).

Area 16

Encounter Difficulty

3 **Manticores** (CR 3, MM, p. 213) = 6 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

According to MM, manticores are familiar with teamwork concept, despite their low Intelligence score. They also can flee or negotiate, and they know Common language.

It will be optimal for the **Manticores** to stay in the air to avoid melee attacks and focus on less armored PCs with their **Tail Spike Multiattack**. According to the book, ceiling is 80 ft. high. The room is big enough, so the **Manticores** are able to spread to avoid AoE spells.

Area 17a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Giant Centipedes** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 323) = 1 PC

Note. This combat encounter is not challenging at all, so you can skip it to save some time of the game session.

Surprise

As a DM you can rule that emerging **Centipedes** makes party surprised. Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

Centipedes attack nearest creatures. You can roll a die to choose random target, if several PCs are at the same range. They can flee but can't surrender or communicate.

Area 17b

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Black Pudding** (CR 4, MM, p. 241) = 3 PCs

Surprise

As a DM, you can rule that awakening the **Pudding** makes party surprised. It is also up to DM if PCs could understand somehow that there is the **Pudding** at the statue and if they could surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#) for some lore about oozes.

Corrosive Form ability harms any PC who touches or attacks **Pudding** in melee and damages metal and wooden weapons. Hope, in your campaign PCs can fix it with **Mending** cantrip. The **Pudding** attacks nearest creature. You can roll a die to choose random target if several PCs are at the same range. Successful **Pseudopod** attack makes any non-magical armor less effective. After PC makes successful attack with slashing weapon or with the spell that deals lightning damage **Pudding** will not take damage. Instead, it can use its Reaction to **Split**. If it does

so, two new Medium **Puddings** appears and since they are new combatants, they also have Reactions available and also can use *Split*. Small **Puddings** are not able to use *Split* ability, but they are still immune to slashing and lightning damage.

Area 18

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Troll** (CR 5, MM, p. 291) = 5 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that *Keen Smell* trait gives +5 to the **Troll's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

Creatures' Tactics

Trolls eat anything they can catch and devour. It is up to DM if troll will negotiate, flee or surrender.

The **Troll** has only *Multiattack*, so just attack less armored PC, ignoring any opportunity attacks. While *Regeneration* trait is active, **Troll** have no reason to worry about damage taken. PCs will not be able to kill the **Troll** without fire or acid damage source. If the **Troll** takes acid or fire damage from any PC make him focus on that particular PC.

Area 21

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Shadowy Duplicates** (CR 1/2, MM, p. 269, with changes) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter is not very challenging if more than one PC present. You can skip it to save some time.

Surprise

As a DM, you can rule that emerging **Duplicates** make party surprised. There is no way for the party to surprise the **Duplicates**.

Creatures' Tactics

If you want to make this combat encounter a bit more challenging let the **Duplicates** attack only their creator. They won't flee, negotiate or surrender.

Strength Drain attack may force PC to take Short Rest, or if the **Duplicates** will have lucky rolls even kill PC with low Strength score. If the party don't use light sources, use *Shadow Stealth* ability before the attack to get Advantage.

Area 23

Encounter Difficulty

4 **Intellect Devourers** (CR 2, MM, p. 191) = 4 PCs

4 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 2 PCs

15 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 2 PCs

Note. This encounter may take place if the **Bugbears** from Area 2b managed to reach Area 23 and you decided that all these creatures set up an ambush or want to negotiate.

Surprise

As a DM, you should decide if these creatures set up an ambush and try to surprise the party or they meet them openly and negotiate for safe passage. It is impossible to surprise these creatures because of **Intellect Devourer's Detect Sentience** trait.

Creatures' Tactics

There are two points where these creatures can meet or ambush the party: Area 25b and corridor leading to the south from Area 21.

See [Area 2b](#) for the information about **Intellect Devourers** and the **Bugbears**

According to VGTM, all goblinoids hate servants of other gods, because they believe that their god Maglubiyet is the only true god. As intelligent creatures they can flee, negotiate or surrender.

Make **Goblins** use their *Shortbow* attacks against less-armored PCs. You can make the **Goblins** focus on paladins or clerics. Note that without

shields **Goblins'** AC is 13. If you decide that there are some places where goblins can hide to get Advantage, they can do it as Bonus Action because of **Nimble Escape** trait. If PCs approach to melee range use Disengage as Bonus Action to run away and attack with **Shortbow** after that.

Area 23a

Encounter Difficulty

6 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter may take place if the **Bugbears** from Area 2b didn't managed to reach Area 23 and **Intellect Devourers** from Area 23b does nothing when detect approaching PCs.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

The best solution for the **Goblins** is to raise alarm at the camp. See [Area 23](#) if they are brave enough to fight. According to the book, if all **Bugbears** are killed, the **Goblins** flee to Area 28.

Area 23b

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Intellect Devourers** (CR 2, MM, p. 191) = 2 PCs
2 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter may take place if the **Bugbears** from Area 2b didn't managed to reach Area 23 and the **Intellect Devourers** does nothing when detect approaching PCs.

Surprise

It is impossible to surprise these creatures because of **Intellect Devourer's Detect Sentience** trait. Follow the standard procedure to determine if these creatures could surprise the party.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2b](#).

Area 23c

Encounter Difficulty

9 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 2 PCs

Note. This encounter may take place if the **Bugbears** from Area 2b didn't managed to reach Area 23 and **Intellect Devourers** from Area 23b does nothing when detect approaching PCs.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

The best solution for the **Goblins** is to raise alarm at the camp. See [Area 23](#) if they are brave enough to fight. According to the book, if all **Bugbears** are killed, the **Goblins** flee to Area 28.

Area 26c

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Gelatinous Cube** (CR 2, MM, p. 242) = 1 PC

Note. This is easy encounter but it can be interesting for your players because of **Cube's** abilities.

Surprise

According to the book, PCs can notice the **Cube** if they have Passive Perception 15 or higher. Otherwise they are surprised. For PCs follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 3](#) for the information about oozes.

Pseudopod is pretty simple ability and you should use it only for opportunity attacks. Since the combat encounter takes place at 10 ft. wide corridor the **Cube** can move 15 ft. forward during **Engulf** attack and force all PCs on its way to make up to three Dexterity saving throws (once per 5 ft.). Note, that you can use **Cube's** regular 15 ft. movement to move closer to PCs, but this movement don't allow to enter PC's space. Don't forget that since PC can't stop at the space of

another PC, he or she can be engulfed even with successful saving throw. It is up to DM, if PC who can't breathe is able to cast spells with verbal component. The other important thing is that PC can't regain hp if he or she is dying because of Suffocating (PHB, p. 183).

Area 28a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 1 PC

Note. According to the book, the **Bugbears** are not going to fight here. They move to [Area 28b](#) to ambush the party with all forces available.

Surprise

The **Bugbears** are not going to surprise anyone. Follow the standard procedure to determine if the **Bugbears** are surprised.

Creatures' Tactics

Fight for bugbears is kind of religious service. They fight ferociously, they love the slaughter and retreat is a big shame for them, but still is an option. They also can negotiate in Common and Goblin languages. Like all goblinoids, bugbears hate clerics and paladins so you can make them focus on such PCs first.

If the **Bugbears** will be surprised by PCs, they can try to call for help of the **Goblins** opening the door to [Area 28b](#). It is possible that PCs will be able to kill or disable the **Bugbears** before they take first turn if they use spells like *Hypnotic Pattern* or *Fireball* and it is up to DM, if the **Goblins** at [Area 28c](#) will hear something. See [Area 2b](#) for **Bugbear's** tactics.

Area 28b

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 1 PC

6 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 1 PC

Note. This encounter takes place if the **Bugbears** from [Area 28a](#) was able to reach this area.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 23](#).

Area 28c

Encounter Difficulty

6 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 1 PC

Note. Without **Bugbears** from [Area 28a](#) this encounter is too easy. You can skip it.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

According to the book, the **Goblins** are not willing to fight without their **Bugbear** masters. If combat encounter occurs, you can use the guidance detailed at [Area 23](#) section.

Area 30

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Air Elemental** (CR 5, MM, p. 123) = 5 PCs

Surprise

According to the book, the **Air Elemental** is not going to hide. The **Air Elemental** senses door opening because of air pressure change, so there is no chance to surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics

The **Air Elemental** is berserk which means it won't negotiate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Make it enter as much PCs' spaces as possible, don't pay attention to opportunity attacks and use the **Whirlwind**. Roll d8 to determine the direction where unlucky PCs will be thrown and if they strike the wall or another PC deal additional damage. If **Whirlwind** is unavailable

because of the recharge just **Slam** nearest PC. If several creatures are at the same range, you can roll a die to determine random target.

Area 31

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Wererat** (CR 2, MM, p. 209) = 1 PC

Note. **Wererat** don't have weapons and according to the Monster Manual, they use **Bite** only to transmit lycanthropy to creatures they want to induct into their clan.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that **Keen Smell** trait gives +5 to the **Wererat's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

Creatures' Tactics

As intelligent creatures, wererats can negotiate, flee or surrender.

The **Wererat** has no effective attacks and won't fight. If fight occur, it will flee to [Area 35](#). Take a look to the Chases rules (DMG, p. 252) if appropriate.

Area 35

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Wererat** (CR 2, MM, p. 209) = 1 PC

10 **Giant Rats** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 327) = 1 PC

Note. If the **Wererat** from [Area 31](#) managed to reach this area add it to these creatures.

Encounter still won't be challenging because according to the book, the **Wererat** is going to flee as fast as possible but as a DM, you can let it fight or you can skip this combat encounter.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that **Keen Smell** trait gives +5 to the **Wererat's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

Creatures' Tactics

As intelligent creatures, wererats can negotiate, flee or surrender.

Rats are animals, so they can't surrender, take captives or communicate without *Speak with Animals* spell or similar abilities, but they can flee.

If you decide to make **Wererats** fight, keep the distance and use **Hand Crossbow** attacks against less-armored PCs within reach. Focus on spell-casters or PCs with magical or silvered weapons.

The **Giant Rats** has **Pack Tactic** trait, so the best solution is to focus on one or two nearest PCs.

Area 36a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Gricks** (CR 2, MM, p. 173) = 2 PCs

Note. This is easy encounter, so you can skip it.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Thanks to **Stone Camouflage** trait the **Gricks** have advantage on Stealth rolls.

Creatures' Tactics

According to MM, gricks are not very intelligent. They don't work together and will attack nearest target available. They can't communicate or surrender, but they can flee.

Note, that **Beak** attack is only available if the **Grick** hit with **Tentacles** attack. And don't forget about resistance to non-magical weapons.

Area 36b

Encounter Difficulty

5 **Gricks** (CR 2, MM, p. 173) = 5 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Thanks to **Stone Camouflage** trait the **Gricks** have advantage on Stealth rolls.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 36a](#).

Area 36c

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Grick Alpha** (CR 7, MM, p. 173) = 7 PCs

Note. This creature is not going to fight, but if PCs will provoke it this could be a very dangerous encounter.

Surprise

The **Grick** is not going to surprise PCs. Follow the standard procedure to determine if PCs could surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics

Gricks can't negotiate, take captives or surrender, but they can flee.

The **Grick Alpha** is not very intelligent, so just make it use **Multiattack** against nearest target.

Area 37

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Revenant** (CR 5, MM, p. 259) = 5 PCs

Note. A **Revenant** does nothing special if the creatures it fights are not its sworn enemies so encounter will be easier than XGE suggest.

Surprise

Revenant itself is not trying to hide, since it isn't planning to fight with the party. Follow the standard procedure to determine if PCs could surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics

According to the book, the **Revenant** is seeking revenge to his previous party members. If for some reasons fight will occur the **Revenant** will be able to use only **Multiattack** option and will deal no extra damage. However, nothing can stop you as a DM, to make the party its sworn enemies and use **Vengeful Glare** in combat and **Vengeful**

Tracker after **Rejuvenation**. It could be fun to make the **Revenant** following the party through 23 levels of the dungeon.

Area 39a

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Ettins** (CR 4, MM, p. 132) = 6 PCs

1 **Intellect Devourer** (CR 2, MM, p. 191) = 1 PC

3 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 2 PCs

19 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 3 PCs

1 **Shrieker** (CR 0, MM, p. 138) = 1 PC

Note. Thanks to the **Intellect Devourer's Detect Sentience** trait these creatures will most probably notice PCs from 300 ft. range because at 5th level they don't have reliable access to **Mind Blank** spell. It is up to DM how would these creatures react, because there are no suggestions in the book. Of course, they don't know who exactly approaches but it seems logical for these creatures to prepare somehow. According to Map Travel Pace table (DMG, p. 242), PCs moving with normal speed will cover 300 ft. of dungeon in 1 minute. It is enough time for some preparations. There is also **Shrieker** mentioned in Area 39 description, but it is not mentioned anywhere else. Since the only entrance located in Area 39a you can place it there. If you decide that all monsters will meet the party in Area 39a you can follow the guidance below. Note that these creatures can overwhelm the party.

Surprise

If you decide that only the **Shrieker** present in this room don't forget that it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus thanks to **False Appearance** trait. If you decide that other creatures hiding here, follow the standard procedure to determine surprise for PCs. Thanks to **Detect Sentience** trait, it is impossible for PCs to surprise these creatures.

Creatures' Tactics

All these creatures are intelligent so they can communicate, flee, surrender or take captives.

Ettins are simple monsters. Use **Multiattack** against nearest PC. If you want to make

encounter a bit easier you can make the **Ettin** fight two PCs simultaneously. You can even make its two heads argue on whom do they want to kill first.

See [Area 2b](#) for the information about the **Intellect Devourer** and the **Bugbears**.

See [Area 23](#) for the information about the **Goblins**.

The **Shrieker** has no attack options but it can *Shriek* every turn which is fun.

Area 39b

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Intellect Devourer** (CR 2, MM, p. 191) = 1 PC

3 **Bugbears** (CR 1, MM, p. 33) = 2 PCs

Note. This encounter may take its place, if you decide that the **Intellect Devourer** is not going to call all allies available in the outpost when it will notice approaching PCs.

Surprise

Thanks to *Detect Sentience* trait it is impossible for PCs to surprise these creatures. Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise for PCs.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 2b](#).

Area 39c

Encounter Difficulty

19 **Goblins** (CR 1/4, MM, p. 165) = 3 PCs

Note. This encounter can take place if you decide that the **Bugbears** from [Area 39b](#) didn't call the **Goblins** and they react to the sounds of the battle at [Area 39b](#) or *Shriek* from [Area 39a](#). According to their speed, the **Goblins** can reach [Area 39a](#) in 2 rounds and [Area 39b](#) in 3 rounds.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 23](#).

Area 39d

Encounter Difficulty

2 **Ettins** (CR 4, MM, p. 132) = 6 PCs

Note. This encounter may take place if you decide that the **Bugbears** from [Area 39b](#) didn't call the **Ettins** and they react to the sounds of battle. According to their speed, the **Ettins** can reach [Area 39c](#) in 1 round, [Area 39a](#) in 2 rounds and [Area 39b](#) in 3 rounds.

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise. Note that *Two Heads* trait gives +5 to the **Ettin's** Passive Perception score (see Passive Checks, PHB, p. 175).

Creatures' Tactics

See [Area 39a](#).

Area 40

Encounter Difficulty

1 **Large Mimic** (CR 4, MM, p. 220, with changes) = 1 PC

Surprise

Thanks to *False Appearance* trait the **Mimic** will easily surprise the party. It is up to DM, if the party have a chance to surprise it.

Creatures' Tactics

According to MM, in most cases mimics have only predatory intelligence and won't negotiate, flee or surrender.

Wait for a curious PC to touch the **Mimic** and activate **Adhesive** trait. Roll initiative. Use **Bite** with Advantage thanks to **Grappler** trait to deal as much damage as you can.

Area 41

Encounter Difficulty

20 **Stirges** (CR 1/8, MM, p. 284) = 2 PCs

Surprise

Follow the standard procedure to determine surprise.

Creatures' Tactics

It is up to DM if stirges have the instinct of self-preservation and can flee. They can't take captives, communicate or surrender.

The **Stirges** have only **Blood Drain** attack and don't have enough Intelligence to use any kind of tactics, so make them focus on nearest PC.