Cyclopean Deeps
Volume I

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Know this, Reader; that by opening this page you have embarked upon a strange, dark journey. The adventures included in this book concern regions of the Under Realms, an area commonly portrayed by authors who choose to focus upon the sinister drow and other such well-known denizens of the deep caverns. What is not well understood is that the dark elves often inhabit the safer areas, the outlying boundaries of darkness, as it were. Read on to learn of the more esoteric, secret places in the Under Realms, the deepest cauldrons of evil.

Down to Ques Querax is the first chapter in a series of adventures that, taken together, comprise an entire subterranean campaign area in the Under Realms. Each of the chapters is designed to be usable as a stand-alone adventure, but when they are used in coordination with each other, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Whether the adventures are used as stand-alone modules or collectively as a large “sandbox” for gaming, each of the areas in the Cyclopean Deeps is potentially very, very deadly. The nature of the threat varies from area to area, but it should be understood that when characters adventure into such places, some of them will die unless the players are very skilled or very lucky … or manage to achieve a felicitous combination of both. Since it is unlikely that low-level characters would even reach these environs alive, it is to be assumed that these higher-level characters will be holding a raise dead scroll or two in reserve for such contingencies. Players that manage to successfully run a character through the Cyclopean Deeps are to be congratulated as the best of the best; for these adventures offer devious and deadly threats alongside legendary treasures.

The Cyclopean Deeps and the Under Realms

The Cyclopean Deeps is the name of a large subterranean region of the Under Realms; fans of the Rappan Athuk megadungeon will be pleased to learn that the Cyclopean Deeps is the region into which the deepest levels of Rappan Athuk intrude. For more information about Rappan Athuk, refer to Frog God Games Rappan Athuk. It is definitely not necessary to have a copy of Rappan Athuk in order to run adventures in the Cyclopean Deeps, but having a deep dungeon (whether of your own design or a purchased module) with physical entrances into the Under Realms will prove very useful for managing the long-term campaign type of adventurers that is likely to take place in this vast area.

Most named regions in the Under Realms are quite distinct from each other, whether by geological formation or by the types of inhabitants that have established themselves in strategically important areas. Characters who enter this area expecting to find drow deep gnomes, and other “normal” features of the Under Realms will swiftly discover the error of their thinking. The vaults of the sunless sea, located to the north of the Cyclopean Deeps, might fit that description, but the Cyclopean Deeps are a different and decidedly more unpleasant area into which the denizens of the Vaults seldom venture.

Unlike the dungeons of Rappan Athuk, which are largely the product of excavations by surface creatures over the course of centuries, the Cyclopean Deeps are for the most part naturally-formed caverns and tunnels. These extend over the course of hundreds of miles, in which any excavations are generally the work of subterranean beings rather than surface creatures — and may easily be thousands of years in age. Humans and their ilk are entirely alien in these great depths of the world, intruders with a morality completely foreign to the denizens of the Under Realms.

To a great degree, the set of Cyclopean Deeps modules may be viewed as a “sandbox” campaign, one in which there is no story arc forced upon the players, allowing them to travel from one area to another whenever they like and however they can. Many of the modules in the series will contain clues or information about other modules in the series, and players are likely to follow up on clues most of the time. However, the series is not designed to come to any particular climactic ending — several are, in fact, quite possible depending on the players’ decisions.

Character Level

The Cyclopean Deeps, as a campaign, is appropriate for a party of 4+ characters with an average level of 10–12, or 8+ characters with an average level around 7.

Placing the Cyclopean Deeps in your Campaign

Because the Cyclopean Deeps are located deeper than most traditional dungeons, it is extremely easy to locate them anywhere in a campaign world. The bizarre underground cultures of the Deeps are not expected to “mesh” with anything in the surface world, and the entrances and exits are generally unknown to surface dwellers. Certain mentions are made in this series of the vaults of the sunless sea, located generally to the north of the Deeps themselves. This area refers to a very famous series of adventure modules from the 1980s, which shall not be specified by name. However, anyone familiar with these modules will recognize the hints included in the name and general description of that area. It is, of course, not necessary to link the Cyclopean Deeps up with any modules from the “old days” … but it can be a lot of fun!
Chapter 1: Down to Ques Querax

Background

Deep beneath the ground, in those regions where the echoes of mankind’s feet are seldom heard, where even firefight is a bizarre intruder from a long-forgotten place, the foes of mankind breed and multiply. It is a realm of dark chaos — for these creatures of the echoing deeps count each other as rivals and enemies. It is a place without peace, a place without virtues, a place where every countenance of evil is to be found in sluggish torpor, stirring restlessly in dreams of cruelty and hatred.

The Cyclopean Deeps is best known — and indeed, little more than this is known at all in the surface world — as the location of Ques Querax. Legends say that Ques Querax is a powerful fortification that controls access through one of the major tunnels through the Cyclopean Deeps to other areas in the Under Realms. Over the centuries, a long succession of Ques Querax’s rulers have offered sanctuary to weaker denizens of the Under Realms in exchange for extremely high taxes and other sacrifices. For many of its inhabitants, Ques Querax effectively offers the dubious option of tyranny exchange for extremely high taxes and other sacrifices. For many of its inhabitants, Ques Querax effectively offers the dubious option of tyranny — for all the riches of the Under Realms are considered quite generous is to make Ques Querax an extremely diverse place, offering a wide variety of crafts and curiosities to those who travel the caverns of the Under Realms. It is one of the very few places in the Cyclopean Deeps where dark elves may be found.

For the GM

This first chapter, “Down to Ques Querax,” is mostly taken up with the basic elements of a “sandbox” adventure: information about travel and encounters within the Cyclopean Deeps as the party moves from hex to hex, following whatever rumors or missions they might choose to investigate. The second part of this chapter does include a mini-adventure that takes place in Hex 0E, describing the party’s descent into the deep levels of the Under Realms. After this chapter, you and the players should both be well prepared for the adventures that follow!

Most of the adventure locations in the Deeps contain various leads or rumors that will give the players enough information to pick and choose from various missions or explorations. It is also likely that at some point the characters may undertake a career as subterranean highwaymen, waylaying caravans and other travelers in the miles of tunnels shown on the Main Map. As an approximate characterization, passageways in the Cyclopean Deeps are generally 20 ft. wide, and will have ceilings about 20 ft. high (although the ceilings will appear lower due to the large number of passageways). Passageways in the Deeps are divided into 3 categories for the purposes of wandering monster checks and other events. These categories are: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Types of Passageways

As an approximate characterization, passageways in the Cyclopean Deeps are divided into 3 categories for the purposes of wandering monster checks and other events. These categories are: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Primary passages are normally 30 ft. wide and have ceilings about 20 ft. high (although the ceilings will appear lower due to the large number of stalactites). Primary passages are generally 20 ft. wide, and will have ceilings 1d10+4 ft. in height. Tertiary passages are approximately 10 ft. in width and are 1d8+3 ft. high.

Wandering Monsters

Detailed descriptions and stat blocks follow the tables in alphabetical order, not in the order of their appearance on the tables. Wandering monster checks are once per hour.

The Main Map of the Cyclopean Deeps is on a hexagonal grid, and the locations of various adventure locations are identified by cross referencing the letters and numbers that run along the sides of the grid. The default starting location is in the southeast corner of the map, at the coordinates 0E (zero from the numbered “x” axis, E from the lettered “y” axis).
Chapter 1: Down to Ques Querax

Primary Passage, 1 in 10 chance of encounter

1 1 giant slug (01–50%) or 1 purple worm (51–00%)
2 1d6+10 fire beetles
3 1d4+1 fire beetles (a group of 4 has a 50% chance for a leader)
4 1d4+1 fire beetles (01–50%) or demon (51–00%); roll 1d3 for demon to determine vrock, hezrou or glabrezu
5 1d4 cavern lizards
6 1d8+8 ghouls led by 1d4+1 ghaunts
7 2d10+10 troglodyte raiders with 1 chieftain
8 1 black pudding (01–50%) or 1 gray ooze (51–00%)
9 1d6 wights
10 1d3 xorn
11 1 neh-thalggu
12 1d2 shrooms with 1d4+1 night-ghoul servants
13 1d8 cavern lizards
14 1 black pudding (01–50%) or 1 gray ooze (51–00%)
15 1d6+10 fire beetles
16 1 giant slug
17 1 purple worm
18 1d4+1 trolls, plus a leader
19 1 syanngg
20 Caravan

Secondary Passage, 1 in 12 chance of encounter

1 1d6+10 fire beetles
2 1 giant slug
3 4d6+3 fungus-bats
4 1d4+2 shriekers
5 1d2 xorn
6 1d4+1 trolls, plus a leader
7 1 syanngg
8 1d3 khryll
9 1 black pudding (01–50%) or 1 gray ooze (51–00%)
10 2d10+20 troglodyte raiders with 1 chieftain
11 1d8 giant spiders
12 1 demon (roll 1d3 to determine vrock, hezrou or glabrezu)
13 1 Leng-spider
14 1d4+1 fire beetles (01–50%) or demon (51–00%); roll 1d3 for demon to determine vrock, hezrou or glabrezu
15 1 Leng-spider
16 1d8 cavern lizards
17 1 black dragon (adult)
18 1d4+1 trolls, plus a leader
19 1 syanngg
20 Caravan

Tertiary Passage, 1 in 12 chance of encounter

1 1d6+10 fire beetles
2 1 giant slug
3 4d8+4 fungus-bats
4 1d4+2 shriekers
5 2d10+20 troglodyte raiders with 2 chieftains
6 1 demon (roll 1d3 to determine vrock, hezrou or glabrezu)
7 1 syanngg
8 1d3 khryll
9 1 black pudding (01–50%) or 1 gray ooze (51–00%)
10 1 demon (roll 1d3 to determine glabrezu, nalfeshnee or marilith)
11 2d6 giant spiders
12 1 purple worm
13 1 Leng-spider
14 1d8 cavern lizards
15 1 black dragon (adult)
16 1d4+1 trolls, plus a leader
17 1 neh-thalggu
18 1d2 dark stalkers each leading 1d6+2 dark creepers
19 1d2 wraiths with 1d4 wights and 1d6 ghouls
20 1d3+3 troll leaders

Beetle, Fire

BEETLE, FIRE

XP 135

hp 4 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Beetle, Fire”)

Black Pudding

BLACK PUDDING

XP 3,200

hp 105 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Black Pudding”)

Caravan

CARAVAN: See the detailed section on caravans, below.

Cavern Lizards

CAVERN LIZARDS

XP 1,600

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N Large magical beast

Init +2 Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +9

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +5 natural, –1 size)

hp 42 (5d10+15)

Fort +7; Ref +6; Will +4

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +10 (2d6+7 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Str 20, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 2

Base Atk +5; CMB +11; CMD 23 (27 vs. trip)

Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Climb +22, Perception +9, Stealth +10 (+14 in areas of natural stone or rock); Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Stealth (+8 in areas of natural stone or rock)

Dark Creeper

DARK CREEPER

CR 2

XP 600

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CN Small humanoid (dark folk)
Init +3; Senses see in darkness; Perception +8

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)
hp 19 (3d8+6)
Fort +3; Ref +6; Will +1
Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 30 ft.
Melee dagger +6 (1d3/19–20 plus poison)
Special Attacks death throes, sneak attack (+1d6)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd):
At will—darkness, detect magic

Str 11, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8
Base Atk +2; CMB +1; CMD 14

Feats Skill Focus (Sleight of Hand), Weapon Finesse
Skills Climb +8, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

Languages Dark Folk
SQ poison use, rag armor
Combat Gear 3 doses of black smear poison; Other Gear
dagger

Death Throes (Su) When a dark creeper is slain, its body combusts in a flash of bright white light, leaving its gear in a heap on the ground. All creatures within a 10-foot burst must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Other dark creepers within 10 feet are automatically blinded for at least 1 round, due to their light blindness. The save is Constitution-based.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark creepers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Dark creepers favor a foul-smelling black paste distilled from certain deep-underground fungi known as black smear.

Black Smear—injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save.

Rag Armor (Ex) A dark creeper’s multiple layers of filthy rags function as leather armor when worn by one of their kind.

See in Darkness (Su) A dark creeper can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, including that created by deeper darkness.

Dark Stalker

XP 1,200
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CN Medium humanoid (dark folk)
Init +4; Senses see in darkness; Perception +8

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +2 natural)
hp 39 (6d8+12)
Fort +4; Ref +9; Will +2
Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 short swords +6 (1d6+2/19–20 plus poison)
Special Attacks death throes, sneak attack (+3d6)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th):
At will—deeper darkness, detect magic, fog cloud
Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 13

Base Atk +4; CMB +6; CMD 20

Feats Double Slice, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse
Skills Climb +10, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +8; Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

Languages Dark Folk
SQ poison use
Combat Gear 6 doses of black smear poison; Other Gear
dagger

Death Throes (Su) When a dark stalker is slain, its body combusts in a flash of white-hot flame. This acts like a fireball that deals 3d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within a 20-foot radius burst. A DC 15 Reflex save halves this damage. A dark stalker’s gear and treasure are unaffected by this explosion. This save is Constitution-based.

Poison Use (Ex) Dark stalkers are skilled in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves. Like their diminutive kin, the dark creepers, dark stalkers use black poison on their weapons and generally carry six doses on them.

Black Smear—injury; save Fort DC 15; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Str; cure 1 save. The poison DC is Constitution based.

See in Darkness (Su) A dark stalker can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, including that created by deeper darkness.

Demon (Vrock)

CR 9
XP 6,400
hp 112 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Demon, Vrock”)

Demon (Hezrou)

CR 11
XP 12,800
hp 145 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Demon, Hezrou”)

Demon (Glabrezu)

CR 13
XP 25,400
hp 186 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Demon, Glabrezu”)

Demon (Nalfeshnee)

CR 14
XP 38,400
hp 203 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Demon, Nalfeshnee”)

Demon (Marilith)

CR 17
XP 102,400
hp 264 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Demon, Marilith”)

Denizen of Leng

CR 8
XP 4,800
hp 95 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2 “Denizen of Leng”)

Duergar

CR 1/3
XP 135
hp 7 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Duergar”)

Duergar Sergeant

Male duergar fighter (Unbreakable) 3 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Duergar”; Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player’s Guide “Unbreakable”) CE Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +1; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +2

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex)
hp 34 (3d10+9)
Fort +6; Ref +2; Will +2; +2 vs. spells and spell-like abilities

Defensive Abilities unflinching +1; Immune paralysis, phantasms, poison

Weakness light sensitivity

Speed 20 ft.
Melee warhammer +6 (1d8+2/x3)
Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd):