

DEEP HORIZON

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INTRODUCTION

In *Deep Horizon*, player characters (PCs) have a chance to discover a lost civilization and possibly save it from extinction.

Encounter Levels: *Deep Horizon* is designed for a group of four 13th-level D&D characters who should advance through 14th level by mid-adventure to the cusp of 15th level at the end. Because the PCs face very dangerous foes, Dungeon Masters (DMs) with inexperienced or small groups may wish to modify some encounters to give characters a better chance of survival.

PREPARATION

As Dungeon Master, you need the three core D&D rulebooks to use this adventure: the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

In the adventure itself, the shaded boxes provide player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instructions. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) appears in abbreviated form in any scene in which the characters meet them; see Appendix I for full NPC statistics.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

About 300 years ago, the desmodus (des-MOH-doo), a race of amicable humanoids who resemble monstrous bats, were locked in a genocidal war with the drow. Growing tired of the fight, the desmodus decided to play dead. Desmodu sages determined that they could seal off their realm and simultaneously destroy the nearest drow city by rerouting a magma flow.

The bold plan worked. The world thought the desmodus were extinct, killed in a final, desperate battle with the drow. Only a small colony of salamanders that traded with the desmodus for metal ores remained in contact with the hidden desmodus. And to protect their metal supply, the salamanders weren't telling anyone.

But an earthquake three months ago reopened the realm of the desmodus and sent the redirected magma flowing to the surface, causing the salamanders' abode to cool off noticeably. This has caused great consternation among the desmodus, who have fallen into a bitter debate about the best course of action. This, in turn, has caused metal shipments to the salamanders to taper off, further enraging them. In the meantime, beholders discovered the remains of the drow city and have set about excavating for treasure. The salamanders and the beholders have agreed to wipe out the desmodus once the beholders have finished their work in the city.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Deep Horizon is primarily a dungeon crawl, with a few elements of mystery thrown in for spice.

The adventure begins as the characters descend into the Underdark, a vast maze of subterranean passages and caverns that lie deep below the surface of the earth. They eventually reach the realm of the desmodus, a series of vast caverns.

Their first stop is a ruined drow city now haunted by beholders. After liberating the beholders' slaves—strange, batlike creatures called desmodus—they'll travel to a friendly enclave of desmodus and be thrust into a murder investigation. Finally, they'll assault a fiery lair full of salamanders that plot to wipe out the desmodus once and for all.

Along the way, they'll meet desmodu explorers, merchants, and raiders. Each faction has its own agenda now that the desmodus' centuries-old isolation has come to an end.

CHARACTER HOOKS

As a DM, you know best how to get your players interested in an adventure. Modify the following suggestions, playing upon the themes most likely to intrigue your players.

- A series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions have rocked a normally stable area recently, causing havoc. Divinations have determined that this activity is not entirely natural and will get worse if not stopped.

Further investigations reveal a network of ancient magma tubes that lead to the Underdark.

- Commoners have begun telling chilling tales of alien creatures with leathery wings who rise from the depths of the earth and soar over the countryside.

Investigating the rumors uncovers no weird, night-flying creatures. But it does reveal a cave complex that opened up after a recent earthquake.

- Some curious sculptures with odd shapes and odder musical qualities have begun showing up for sale in some shops lately.

A sage or bard can tell these items were made by an extinct race called the desmodus, monstrous bats who perished in a war with the drow three centuries ago. A divination spell such as *legend lore* reveals that the items are only about three months old but nonetheless genuine.

Further inquiries reveal that some adventurers traded some gems and potions for the statues after meeting a group of strange, batlike creatures in the Underdark.

- One of the PCs has acquired a map that purports to show the way to the lost drow city of Chael-Rekshaar.

Chael-Rekshaar is the drow city the desmodus destroyed, and the map is genuine. However, the PCs won't find any drow in the city.

DESMODUS

Appendix II contains game statistics for desmodus. The desmodus, however, are complex creatures, and the PCs are not meeting them when they are at their best. This is a time of great upheaval in the desmodu civilization, and this upheaval has produced heroes, scoundrels, and martyrs among the desmodus.

DESMODU SOCIETY

In this adventure, the desmodus have formed several loose factions, each with its own view of how to deal with their civilization's reentry into the larger world.

The War Faction: These desmodus believe they are part of a warrior race that should take what it needs by force (or at least by fighting for pay). War faction members tend to be neutral evil. Groups of them have spread through the Underdark, raiding and occasionally serving as mercenaries. They have stooped so low as to enslave fellow desmodus and sell them to any buyer they can find.

These desmodus usually attack first and ask questions later. They usually speak only the languages that all desmodus know (Undercommon, Terran, and Desmodu). If captured, war faction desmodus expect fair treatment as prisoners of war. If they suspect the PCs are going to kill them, they refuse to answer questions. If treated honorably, they agree to answer questions in return for their freedom.

The Explorer Faction: These desmodus are busy exploring the Underdark and even the surface (at night). They are trying to refresh desmodu knowledge of the world and find allies, trading partners, and perhaps other enclaves of desmodus.

Explorers greet any intelligent creatures they meet, but they try to keep their distance until friendly relations are established. They usually speak Common, Undercommon, Terran, and Desmodu.

The Merchant Faction: These desmodus go where raiders or explorers have been, seeking wealth and influence. They'd rather barter for goods than fight, but they're wary of attacks, especially in areas where desmodu raiders have been. They travel light and prefer gems, art objects, or other portable goods (coin is too heavy to be efficient). They usually speak Common, Undercommon, Terran, and Desmodu.



Desmodu Religion

The desmodus revere a deity called Vesperian, lord of nocturnal fliers. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) reveals that Vesperian is a neutral deity, largely forgotten, who has some worshipers among giant owls and vampires. Many primitive tribes recognize Vesperian as the patron of bats and owls.

Desmodu Kinship Badges

As noted in Appendix III, a desmodu kinship badge serves to identify its wearer to other desmodus, much as a coat of arms does for a knight. These items are most easily “seen” with the desmodus’ blindsight ability, but a Spot check (DC 15) reveals one as well (don’t forget the –1 penalty for each 10 feet).

A single desmodu may wear several kinship badges, denoting family, friendships, achievements, and so on. Each of the factions the PCs encounter during this adventure has its own badge, however, and most members wear them along with any other kinship badges they might have.

Mercenaries and Raiders: A figure eight superimposed on a small disc.

Explorers: Three concave discs joined in a pattern that resembles a three-leaf clover.

Merchants: An inverted crescent with a flat bar at each end (actually a stylized merchant’s scale).

Talking to Desmodus

Every desmodu the PCs meet during this adventure knows the rudiments of desmodu history and the philosophies of the various factions. They can reveal the following if asked the right questions:

- “The realm of the desmodus always has been a cruel place. We tried to live peacefully, but we had implacable enemies who wished to enslave us or even consume us like cattle: the drow, the miniflayers, and the beholders.”

- “Six generations ago our people were struggling against the drow and losing the fight. Then our elders found a way to turn the very earth against our foes. Deep beneath the shrine of Vesperian, our strongest magicians bent a river of fire to their will. They buried the drow alive, but they buried us alive, too. Now the earth has trembled, and we are part of the world again.”

A “generation” among the desmodus is 50 years.

Though the desmodus currently have no wizards or clerics, they once did (their civilization has declined considerably after six generations of isolation). These spellcasters merely dammed up a river of magma and redirected it, destroying the drow city and the passage that led to their cavern.

- “The high priest and guardian of the shrine is Baandar, a desmodu of great age who sits in the shrine pondering omens and giving advice.”
- “At present four kinds of desmodus exist: those who wish to fight, those who wish to trade, those who wish to explore, and those who wait to learn what comes of the fighting, trading, and exploring.”

them, waterskins they refresh from time to time as they come across streams or springs, and a reasonable idea of where they are going. No map is provided for the opening phase of the adventure; assume the PCs can find their way down to the realm of the desmodus without any great difficulty.

Characters who have obtained maps might wish to try teleporting. Such a maneuver places them in the general vicinity of Chael-Rekshaar.

Common Dungeon Features

This adventure takes place underground. Unless noted otherwise in the text, the particulars for features such as walls and doors are as follows:

Ceilings: In natural areas, ceilings are twice as high as an area is wide. In structures, ceilings are 15 feet high.

Doors: Doors are stone and unlocked, but usually stuck.

◆ **Stone Doors:** 2 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 30; AC 5; break DC 25.

Floors: In natural areas, floors are either limestone or volcanic rock. Like all natural floors, they are extremely uneven, with many bumps and cracks. Running or charging across these floors is impossible.

In structures, floors are smooth stone.

Light: Corridors in the Underdark are usually dark as a moonless night. Some areas are lined with phosphorescent fungi, which makes the area about as bright as a moonlit night with an overcast sky. Characters can see about 30 feet in such areas (60 feet with low-light vision).

Raised Ledges: These are 20 feet higher than the floor surrounding them.

Walls: In natural areas, the walls are unworked and very uneven. They’re also damp and often covered with fungi. They have a Climb DC of 20. Natural walls are at least 3 feet thick.

◆ **Natural Walls:** 36 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; AC 5; break DC 65.

Inside a structure, walls are reinforced masonry at least 1 foot thick. These walls have a Climb DC of 15.

◆ **Reinforced Masonry Wall:** 12 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 360; AC 5; break DC 45.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The journey to the realm of the desmodus winds through the dark caverns for about ninety miles. Each hour underground, the characters have an 8% chance to encounter something in the Underdark. Consult the following table if an encounter occurs.

Random Encounter Notes

The encounter table uses the same terms and procedures as the random encounter tables in Chapter 4 of the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Assume that the player characters have made all suitable arrangements before plunging into the Underdark. They should have plenty of dried food with

RANDOM UNDERDARK ENCOUNTERS

d%	Role	Number of Creatures and Kind	Treasure
01–10	Fiend	1d4+2 mind flayers	50% +1
11–20	Fiend	1d2 beholders and charmed monster(s) (roll on Table 4–25 in the <i>DMG</i>)	50% +1
21–25	Fiend	3 night hags and 3 nightmares	50% +1
26–40	Friend	1d3+1 desmodu explorers*	Equipment
41–55	Friend	1d4+1 desmodu merchants*	Equipment
56–65	Tough	1d3+1 noble salamanders	50% +1
66–85	Tough	1d4+2 desmodu raiders*	50% +1
86–88	—	Roll on Table 4–25 in the <i>DMG</i>	—
89–91	—	Roll on Table 4–26 in the <i>DMG</i>	—
92–94	—	Roll on Table 4–27 in the <i>DMG</i>	—
95–97	—	Roll on Table 4–28 in the <i>DMG</i>	—
98–100	—	Roll on Table 4–29 in the <i>DMG</i>	—

*See Appendix I for statistics

Desmodu Explorers: A group of explorers is led by a 3rd-level warrior (sergeant), and each explorer is mounted on a war bat (see Appendix II). The rank-and-file desmodus in the group have standard desmodu gear listed in Appendix II.

Desmodu Merchants: In addition to the merchants, the group also has 2d6 guard bats and 1d4 war bats. Each merchant carries typical desmodu equipment. The group also has 1d6 each of the following items for sale: *potion of cure light wounds*, *potion of protection from elements (fire)*, tanglefoot bag, smokestick, sunrod, thunderstone, alchemist's fire, frostfire*, breathing mask*, extra air supplies*, and 50 feet of desmodu cable*. Items marked with asterisks are new items detailed in Appendix III.

Desmodu Raiders: Raiders carry the same equipment as other desmodus. The first time the PCs encounter raiders, use the Ambush encounter below.

Underdark Geomorphs

The maps provided with this product include several sections of caves and caverns you can use as settings for random encounters. You can orient these maps however you like.

Introductory Encounter: Ambush (EL 14)

Run this encounter anytime before the PCs reach the realm of the desmodus. It introduces them to desmodus and gives them a chance to learn about the situation they're entering. Desmodu raiders range up and down the route the PCs must follow to reach the main portion of the adventure. This encounter showcases a particularly successful group of raiders that have claimed their own section of corridor.

Use map 1A for this encounter. It makes no difference which direction the PCs enter.

As you march through the darkness you see the corridor begin to open up a little, getting wider and higher. Almost the instant you notice this, arrows buzz through the air around you.

The raiders have figured out that most creatures that can see in the dark see about 60 feet, and they've found the perfect spot to lie in wait for such creatures. Because their blindsight has a range of 120 feet, they easily spot the approaching PCs (even if they are invisible) before the characters see them.

A natural chimney exists in the ceiling near the center of the chamber, 70 feet above the main floor. The chimney rises another 20 feet before opening into a chamber about 30 feet in diameter, prime real estate for desmodus. A length of desmodu cable dangles from the top of the chimney to the top of the ledge, secured with one of the raiders' grappling hooks.

Creatures: One desmodu stands at each location marked with an X, keeping a lookout for approaching prey. Also, one of the raiders' previous victims, a desmodu explorer, lies trussed up in the chamber. The raiders plan to sell him to a slaver they know.

➔ **Desmodu Raiders (6):** hp 114, 109, 112, 98, 119, 123; see Appendix II. **Possessions:** In addition to the standard desmodu gear, each raider has a breathing mask, a *potion of cure light wounds*, two smokesticks, a sunrod, a tanglefoot bag, two flasks of alchemist's fire, and one flask of frostfire.

➔ **Viday, Desmodu Prisoner:** hp 116 (currently 38); see Appendix II.

Tactics: When the desmodus surprise the PCs, the four atop the ledge fire their bows while the two on the main floor use their hope ability (the two powers don't stack, but the desmodus want a better chance to get the maximum duration).

The desmodus have scattered caltrops in shaded areas on the map. It takes a Spot check (DC 20) for an unwary character to notice the caltrops, but they're fairly easy to find if somebody looks for them (Search DC 5). If a character spends an extra 5 feet of movement, he or she can pass safely through a square full of caltrops. It takes a full-round action to sweep a square clean of caltrops. No matter what the PCs do about the caltrops, the desmodus on the ledge keep firing their bows.

The two desmodus on the main floor stay out of sight until a foe approaches the ledge. When that happens, the desmodus atop the ledge jump down, drawing their notboras, while the two desmodus on the main floor move to attack. One of the desmodus uses despair on the intruders. The desmodus try to concentrate their attacks on one character—preferably one they have flanked.

Once battle is joined in earnest, the desmodus stay alert for chances to use their stunning screech on as many foes as possible. They keep up their hope effect and use their sonic blasts on characters they have a

hard time hitting. If heavily damaged, they use Expertise to improve their Armor Class and ignite smokesticks to conceal themselves. Because they have blindsight, they aren't affected by the smoke. Then they resume attacking with their superior reach or their bows.

If the fight goes against them, the desmodus climb the ledge and then scramble up the cable to their abode. They surrender if escape seems impossible.

Development: If the PCs defeat the raiders, their captive calls for help. If the characters capture any desmodus or rescue the captive (named Viday), they can learn a lot about the desmodus. Viday eagerly answers the PCs' questions and offers to guide them to the desmodu enclave.

Treasure: In addition to their equipment, the raiders have collected a *potion of ghoul touch*, a *potion of dark-vision*, 279 gp, and a silver belt buckle set with black onyx (worth 28 gp), which they have stored in their chamber. The chamber also holds Viday's equipment (standard for a desmodu).

Because of the cracking and tilting, running or charging is impossible.

Walls Because the whole temple is tilted to the north, any wall at the south end of a chamber actually slopes more than 90 degrees, which adds +10 to the Climb DC.

Grilles: The walls in several chambers have steel grilles to allow a view into the adjacent chamber. These grilles are made of 4-inch-thick steel perforated with 1-inch holes.

☑ **Grille:** 4 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 120; AC 5; break DC 35.

Doors: The stone temple doors are decorated with a spiderweb motif and unlocked. The doors all had locks at one time, but the beholders and their minions have broken most of them. A few areas have one-way trapdoors.

☑ **One-way Trapdoor:** 4 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 60; AC 5; break DC 28. The trapdoor opens automatically when pushed from above, but must be broken open from below.

REALM OF THE DESMODUS

The desmodus occupy only one of three vast interconnected caverns. The other caverns house the ruined drow city of Chael-Rekshaar and the salamander's fiery citadel. Map 1 shows the whole area. The map is not to scale and is intended to show where the caverns are in relation to each other. It's roughly 45 miles through caves and tunnels between the major locations on the map. While the characters are traveling between Chael-Rekshaar, the desmodu enclave, and the salamander citadel, roll hourly for random encounters.

A. Ruins of Chael-Rekshaar

This site has been reduced to a pile of lava-choked rubble. The only building still standing is the former temple of Lolth, which is now headquarters for a trio of beholders while they loot the remains of the city. Maps 3A, 3B, and 3C depict the temple.

Features

The temple has three stories carved from solid rock. The temple originally had a facade that looked like a gigantic stone spider. The earthquake and lava flow that destroyed the city also obliterated most of the facade, but the surviving portions of the temple have a layout that suggests a spider.

The temple's rock foundation shifted when the city was destroyed. Now the whole structure tilts about 30 degrees, with the north side tilted down and the south side tilted up.

Floors: Temple floors were originally made of smooth stone but are now badly broken up and cracked.

Residents

The beholders have employed a group of desmodu mercenaries to provide security. They also have an assortment of slaves and other servants, including four salamander smiths.

If the PCs capture a servant or free a slave, they can get some information about what's going on in the temple.

Slaves: These unfortunates were all captured by the beholders or sold to them by desmodu raiders. They know their daily routine, but that's about all. If freed and treated well, they can relate the following to PCs when questioned:

- "We were minding our own business when we were captured and forced to work."
- "The beholders have been using their eye rays to bore tunnels in the lava rock. This was once a drow city, and the beholders are busy looting it. I guess they need us to actually salvage anything useful."

The beholders' technique is to bore into rock with their *disintegrate* rays until they find a building. Then the slaves excavate the place by hand so nothing valuable gets disintegrated by mistake.
- "When we collect a load of stuff, we drag it back here and sort it. The beholders have a group of fire creatures who repair or melt down any metal, and the beholders grab anything else that seems valuable."
- "The fire creatures are just in the room south of the big chamber. A guard barracks exists somewhere to the southwest of the big chamber, and another on the upper level, where the beholders live."

The "big chamber" is area 4.
- "Three or four beholders live here, but only two are here now, we think. The beholders live on the