

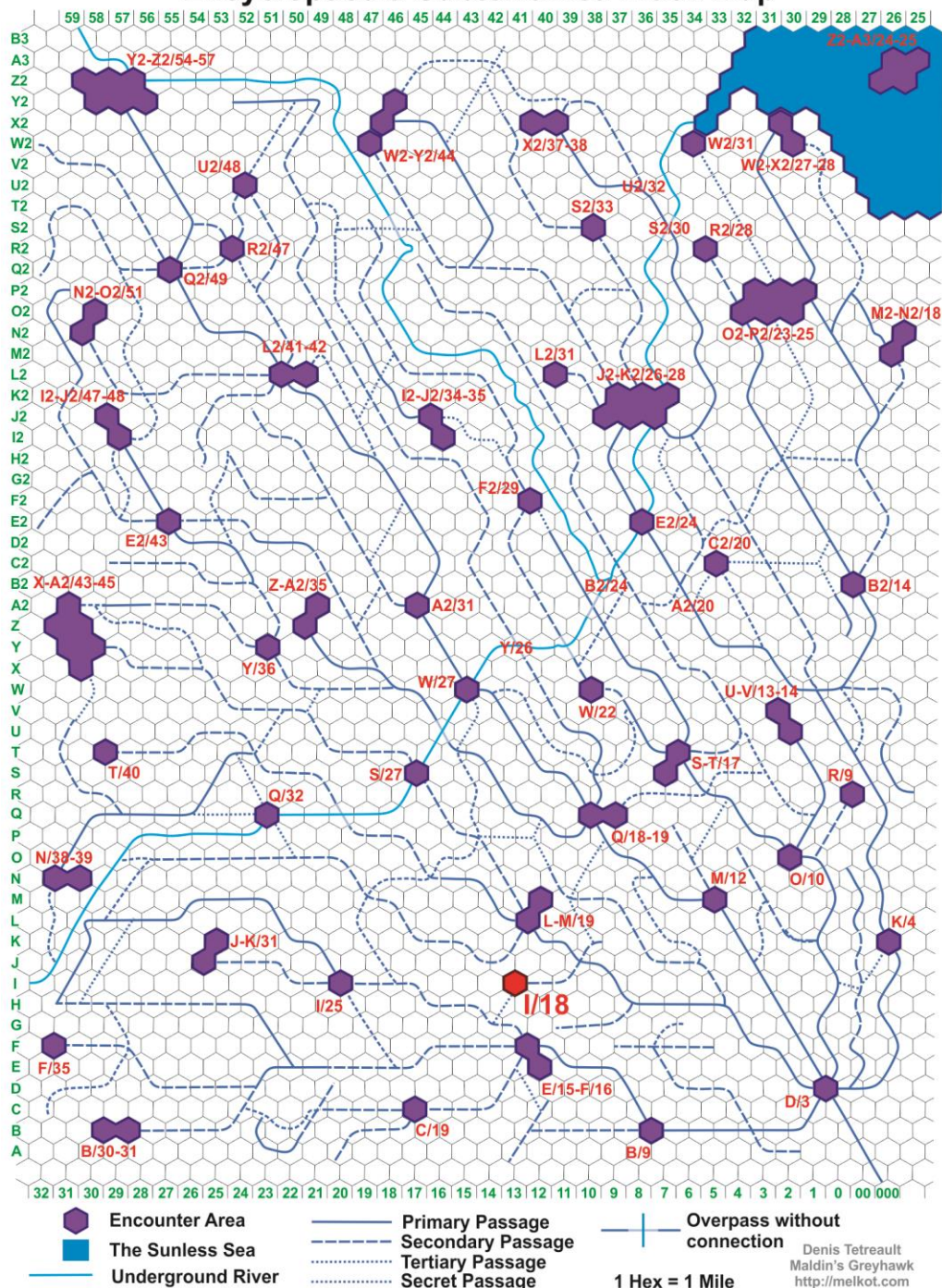
D4: ENCYCLOPÆDIA SUBTERRANICA

ENCOUNTER AREA I/18

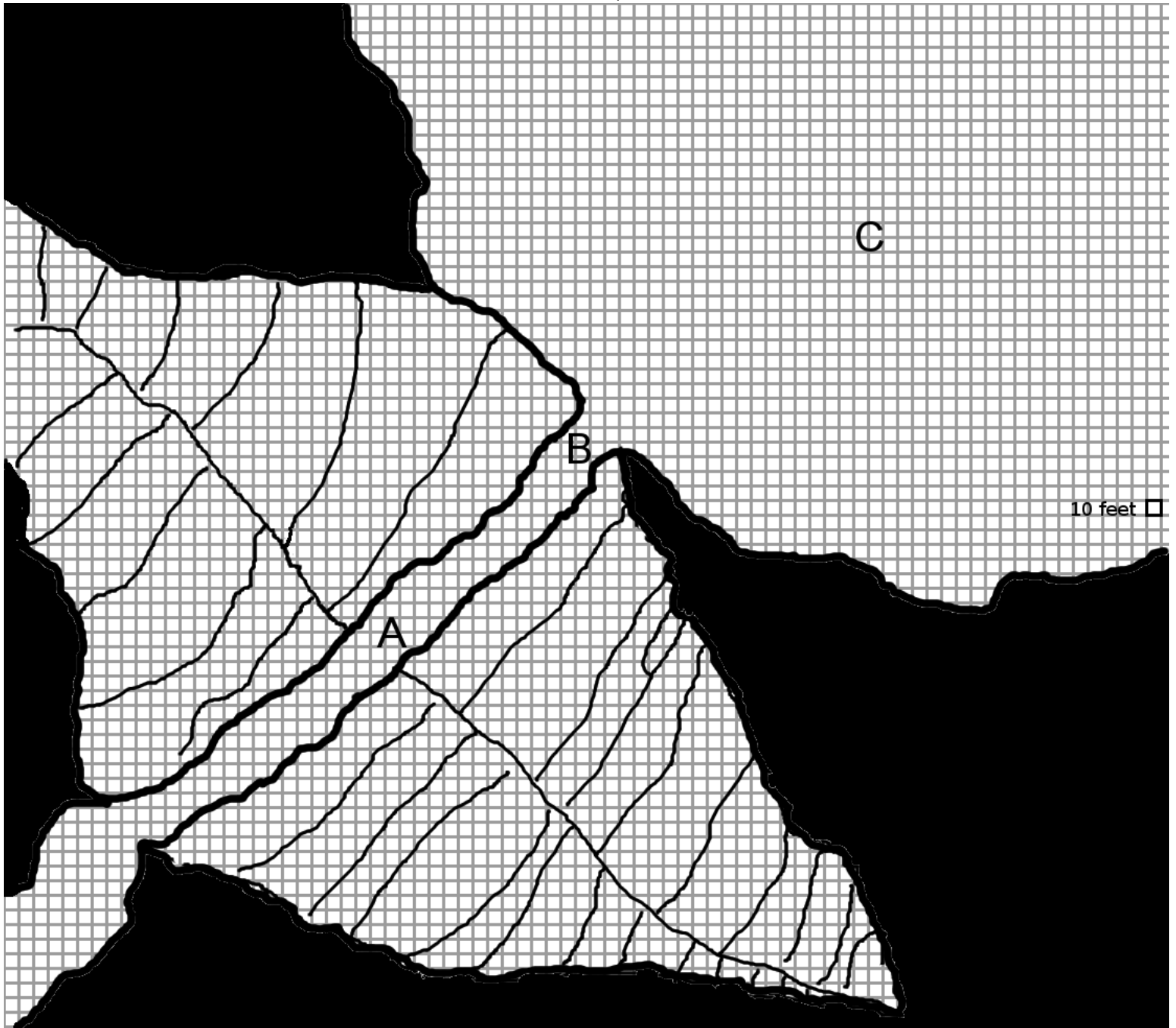
Bugs

by Iain_IF

Greyhawk's Underdark Encyclopaedia Subterranea Index Map



This encounter was developed as part of a collaborative exercise on the Dragonsfoot forums (<http://www.dragonsfoot.org>) to describe the rest of the "Depths of the Earth" from Dungeon Modules D1-3 by E. Gary Gygax, developing those areas illustrated on the map but not detailed in the modules themselves. For more information about D4: Encyclopædia Subterranea and the other encounter areas on the index map, visit **Maldin's Greyhawk - Greyhawk's Underdark** at <http://melkot.com/locations/underdark/underdark.html>



ENCOUNTER AREA I/18

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The tunnel through the rock and stone begins to stretch vertically, the ceiling becoming increasingly higher as the party continues forward, the walls receding. Eventually, the ceiling stretches far out of sight, a full 900 feet above. Rock formations of various shapes and sizes rise up out of the floor, blocking quick and easy passage, but not impeding the way more so than any other place. Flapping and a strange snapping and grinding noise echo irregularly down from the blackness above. After 1,000 feet, this pocket in the earth is broken by a deep crevasse, extending far down into the depths. Heat and moisture rise up, swirling, out of the crevasse, wrecking infravision.

The crevasse spans the tunnel and is wider than can be seen across, but stonework bridges the crevasse. Made of a single arch of natural stone, this unnatural-looking bridge is 10 feet wide, has no railing, and appears

somewhat moistened from the rising vapors. Absent magical endeavors, it appears to be the only way across.

The crevasse is 350 feet across and a solid 600 feet deep, ending in magma. A fall into the crevasse is likely to be fatal. The tunnel here forms an odd, limited system of predator and prey. Up above are nests of Gloomwings and labyrinths of Tunnel Worms, each locked in a struggle to consume the other. The flapping sounds are the Gloomwings changing position out of sight, while the snapping and grinding sounds are the Tunnel Worms stretching and extending out of their tunnels in an attempt to seize the airborne Gloomwings.

The bridge over the crevasse is stable and allows for normal movement across it. It becomes dangerous only when a character on the bridge becomes confused from the effects of the Gloomwing's display. Then, a character runs the risk of wandering off the edge of the bridge and into the crevasse.

This tunnel and the bridge is often used by lone travelers, outcasts, and misfits, since it is rarely patrolled. Experience has shown that the Gloomwings are drawn to light, so those who have passed here before know to hide any light source and rely on other vision to avoid undue attention. Any light shown near the bridge will draw a single Gloomwing (H.P.: 26) in 1d4+1 rounds. In general, the Gloomwing will alight on a rocky outcropping at the furthest extent of vision, giving opportunity to its prey to see its confusing wing patterns, before attacking one of the travelers. Note that combat with a Gloomwing releases pheromones that have a 20% chance each round of attracting 1-4 additional Gloomwings. While only one Gloomwing will investigate the light source at a time, multiple Gloomwings may be drawn into combat.

On the far side of the bridge lies the remains of a lone traveler who fell to the Gloomwings. Several eggs were laid and two have hatched from within his corpse. Now two Tenebrous Worms (H.P.: 55, 45) are present, blocking egress from the bridge.

Lastly, the area above the bridge, on the right-hand side, contains the lair of a Tunnel Worm (H.P.: 48). It will attack any Gloomwing that flies by, such as one interested in the party. If frustrated in its attacks on the Gloomwing, it will happily take a character for dinner instead. If badly wounded, it will retract into its tunnel.

The corpse is of a surface dweller, probably a human. Its armor is destroyed by the hatching of the Gloomwing eggs, but its backpack contains four potions, two of healing, one of super-heroism, and one of invulnerability. Wedged into the side of the crevasse, ten feet below, is its **shield +1, +4 against missiles**, but it is unreachable from the surface. Two draw daggers, already corroding, are wedged into its belt, next to an empty scabbard. Two large rubies worth 500 g.p. and a gold necklace worth 300 g.p. sit along with 30 platinum pieces in its belt pouch.

Beyond the crevasse, the tunnel begins to widen appreciably and becomes close to 300 feet wide. The tunnel continues with these dimensions for another thousand feet, until the ceiling begins to lower and the walls come closer. In this narrowing space hop hundreds of cave crickets of varying sizes. The smallest of the crickets are barely larger than their above-ground brethren, but the largest approach the size of a horse, and pose an inadvertent threat to the party. The cave crickets are the natural prey of the Tunnel Worms and Gloomwings. The chitinous remnants of the dead crickets crunch underfoot.

The cave crickets are naturally reticent and will avoid contact with party, if not crowded. So long as the party avoids displaying light, the remaining thousand feet of tunnel can be safely traversed, and the tunnel will resume its normal size and shape through the Depths.