A Demonic Delve: Mouth of Demogorgon

A delve for five 25th-level adventurers

A reeking saltwater fen floods the fields of a once-bountiful land, its wasted crops rotting where they stand. Beyond the remains of the only town that still clings to life here, the mouth of a cave vomits forth a bloody tide of brine. A shrieking wind screams a challenge to the heroes—calling out with the voice of Demogorgon.

Background

Arcana or Nature DC 17: The brine is not a natural phenomenon, and it carries a particular dark essence. This flood comes from Abysm, the realm of Demogorgon, Prince of Demons.

History or Religion DC 26: A story is told of the heroic adventurer Saint Daenor, who turned his back on wealth and fame to settle in these lands generations ago. Though the area had a reputation as a demon-haunted waste, Saint Daenor was said to have driven the demons out and tamed it.

Hook: Friends in Need

The town affected by this disaster should have a connection to the adventurers. It might be the home of a trusted friend, a patron, or a contact. Moreover, the loss of this important agricultural region is felt beyond the town and the abandoned settlements around it. The local lord or monarch stands to lose resources, subjects, and trade unless the ongoing disaster is undone. The lords of bordering lands might see these abandoned territories as an excuse to send in spies or armies of occupation.

Approaching the Town

In ages past, an open demongate to Abysm made this region a wasteland. The powerful adventurer Saint Daenor closed the gate after a brutal struggle against the demons and the cultists that defended it. Over long centuries, the land healed and was prosperous. However, by the use of dark rituals, the cultists of Demogorgon have opened the demongate again, bringing ruin down on the area. Like the tentacles of its murderous lord, the brine of Abysm lays waste to all it strikes.

- The lands in and around the town are difficult terrain.
- The brine blast hazard makes it difficult to enter the temple. Characters moving up the slope between the brine cavern and the temple treat the slope as difficult terrain. A hit from the brine blast knocks a creature back, as noted in the hazard statistics block.
- Side caves branch out from the main cavern, and can be used to avoid the brine blast.

1: The Town

Set the first part of the adventure in the town after the heroes have ventured there to find it destroyed. Populate the settlement with stragglers who have refused to abandon their homes, including one or more nonplayer characters with ties to the party. See “Creating NPCs,” Dungeon Master’s Guide, page 186, for ideas on detailing the townsfolk the characters meet.

The flooded landscape is bleak and lifeless. Several of the town’s buildings are sinking into the mire, and all appear strangely drained of color. The salt water lingers in stagnant pools, the ground around them a mass of clinging mud. Where the fields are dry, they show how water has flowed and evaporated, leaving stains of red-brown salt.

Allow the heroes to investigate, to make skill checks to learn the information presented under “Background,” above, and to talk to the remaining townsfolk. Any conversation reveals that although most of the townsfolk fled shortly after the floods first came, four farmers who vowed to stay behind disappeared during the night. Neighbors describe this behavior as odd, saying that the missing townsfolk had been dead-set against leaving.

2: The Tomb of the Saint

Rays of dusty sunlight break the darkness of the tomb, illuminating an ancient stone sarcophagus. The light reflects in a way that makes the coffin glow with a pale radiance. The face of Saint Daenor has been sculpted into the stone. It appears peaceful, as if waiting patiently.

By making a DC 16 Arcana or Religion check, a character intuits that the spirit of Saint Daenor lingers in this place and can be appealed to for aid. The characters can undertake a skill challenge to convince the spirit of their need: complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures); level 26 (XP 9,000); primary skills Diplomacy, History, and Religion.

If the characters are successful in the challenge, a ritual book appears on top of the sarcophagus in a burst of radiance. The ancient tome contains a record of Saint Daenor’s struggle to close the demongate when it was first active. Using the book, the characters gain a +2 bonus to checks made to close the portal to Abysm.
3: The Haunted Hills
Like the flooded fields, the foliage of the hills above the town has a burned and withered look. The destruction here is so intense that it takes a DC 27 Nature check to discern the path of the brine and follow it back to its source. If the characters fail this check, they stumble on the correct path after a half-day’s searching. During that time, the cultists in the “Gateway to Abysm” encounter sacrifice one townsperson. When the characters begin that encounter, they begin the “Closing the Portal” skill challenge with one failure.

The hike up into the hills is a long one. Once you reach higher ground, the land becomes dry again, although the vegetation here is as burned and desolate as that on the plain below. Your search ends as you follow the devastation to a torrent of water flowing from a cave and eroding the hillside beneath it. Giving the flow a wide berth, you come up around the side of the hill to the cave’s entrance.

4: The Brine Cavern
The cave mouth opens up to a dark cavern. Two smaller caves are set above it like eyes over a mouth, but these shallow caverns do not connect to the larger cave network.

Set deep into the hillside, three natural caverns resemble a malformed, screaming face whose mouth vomits forth a rushing flow of red-black brine. The hiss of salt-tinged wind comes steadily from the central cavern. The cavern’s interior is pitch black beyond the entrance. The torrent slows to a trickle, then flares again to drench the hillside in saltwater.


5: The Demon Temple
The huge cavern within the hillside is a temple to Demogorgon and the sanctum of the Demon Prince’s cult.

At the passageway’s end, an enormous chasm opens up within the hill. Flickering torchlight sends shadows dancing along the walls. Where the natural floor of the cavern gives way to smooth flagstones, mighty granite columns carved with snarling demon faces reach halfway to the ceiling thirty feet above. The shadows of the cavern seem to whisper with a multitude of incoherent voices, beckoning you on.

Tactical Encounter: “Gateway to Abysm,” page 98.
**Guards of the Temple**

**Encounter Level 25 (38,150 XP)**

**Setup**

1 guardian demon soul drinker (G)

3 hezrou manglers (H)

The demonic temple consists of a large central cavern fronted by a series of branching caves. A steep slope leads up to the temple, but the portal to Abyss sends violent waves of brine down the slope that can wash creatures out of the cave. A guardian demon and three hezrou lie in wait here for intruders.

**When the adventurers enter the cave, read:**

The stench exuding from the shadowed entrance to this cavern is abominable. The tang of salt air mixes with the rank taint of death. Pools of brine cover the cavern floor, filled with otherworldly shells of prismatic color and the flitting shapes of tiny, two-headed fish. Past the mouth of the cave, an unnatural darkness looms.

The guardian demon lurks in the center of the main cavern, drawing the characters’ attention as it grants the hezrous a +2 bonus to their Stealth checks to hide.

**Perception Check**

**DC 31:** Beyond the gloom, the thrum of chanting voices comes from a distance, faint above the echoing ripple of the pools spread across the cavern floor. Suddenly, something snakelike—some kind of whip or tentacle—flickers in the shadows before disappearing from sight.

**When the adventurers spot the guardian demon, read:**

A horrid creature rises from the darkness of the cavern ahead. Its four eyes gleam above a maw of knifelike teeth; its arms split into coiling tentacles that mimic the form of Demogorgon.

If the hezrous are not spotted, they wait until the adventurers pass their hiding places before ambush- ing from behind. If they are spotted, the hezrous fight from the cave entrances, blocking them to keep the characters in the cavern where they are vulnerable to the brine blast hazard.
3 Hezrou Manglers (H)  Level 24 Brute
Large elemental humanoid (demon)  XP 6,050 each
HP 275; Bloodied 137  Initiative +17
AC 36, Fortitude 38, Reflex 34, Will 34  Perception +17
Speed 6  Darkvision
Saving Throws +2

Traits
- Noxious Stench (poison)  Aura 1
  Enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls. While the mangler is bloodied, any enemy that ends its turn within the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.
- Demonic Step
  The mangler ignores difficult terrain.

Standard Actions
- Slam  At-Will
  Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
  Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage.
- Bite  At-Will
  Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +29 vs. AC
  Hit: 2d8 + 10 damage.
- Combination Attack  At-Will
  Effect: The mangler uses slam and bite.

Triggered Actions
- Variable Resistance  2/Encounter
  Trigger: The mangler takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.
  Effect (Free Action): The mangler gains resist 20 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter or until it uses variable resistance again.

Skills Stealth +22
Str 28 (+21)  Dex 20 (+17)  Wis 20 (+17)
Con 25 (+19)  Int 8 (+11)  Cha 16 (+15)

Alignment chaotic evil  Languages Abyssal

Features of the Area
Illumination: The cavern is dark. The brine blast douses any nonmagic light sources carried by creatures struck by it.
Channel: The deadly brine of Abyss flows down the channel and out of the cavern. See the brine blast hazard.
Side Caves: Creatures within the side caves winding off the main cavern cannot be targeted by the brine blasts. The Large demons must squeeze to enter the side caves.

Brine Blast  Level 27 Blaster
Hazard
A blast of red-tinged saltwater slams through the cavern like a river of blood.

Hazard: The brine blast randomly explodes, rushing down the channel in the center of the map and dashing creatures against the walls and sweeping them away.

Perception
- No Perception check is required to notice the brine blast.
- DC 26: Each explosion of brine is preceded by the same faint roaring sound.

Trigger
Although this hazard is always active, it attacks at random. Roll initiative for the hazard at the start of the encounter. On each of its turns, roll a d20: The hazard attacks only on a roll of 10 or higher.

Attack
Standard Action  Area squares within the brine blast’s path
Target: Each Medium or smaller creature in the path of the brine blast.
Attack: +32 vs. Reflex
Hit: 4d10 + 8 damage, and the brine blast pushes the target 8 squares along the path of the blast and knocks it prone.
Special: Once activated, this hazard remains in effect during the “Gateway to Abyss” encounter.

Countermeasures
- Creatures in any of the side caves cannot be targeted by the brine blast.
- A creature that succeeds at a Perception check to notice the sound preceding the brine blast gains a +2 bonus to Reflex against the hazard’s attack.
- If the portal to Abyss is closed, the hazard is deactivated. See the “Closing the Portal” skill challenge in the “Gateway to Abyss” encounter.

Tactics
If their ambush is successful, the hezrous use their surprise round to attack with reach. A hezrou tries to keep the characters within its noxious stench aura whenever possible.

The guardian demon uses tentacle seize and fearsome gaze to immobilize enemies in the path of the brine blast.

Whenever a character is carried away by the brine blast, the hezrous and the guardian demon concentrate their attacks on the remaining characters, advancing into the main cavern as necessary. They attempt to block the side caves, preventing the characters from seeking safety there.