

Crushed Keep Caverns

Beneath the low hill on which stand the remains of Crushed Keep, and running out under the grasslands to its west, is this complex of natural caves and constructed chambers. Ideas for the contents were inspired by, compiled and adapted from the Inkwell Ideas book that accompanies the Dungeonmorph Lairs Dice Set used randomly to determine the overall layout of the complex, "Dungeonmorph Delves & Descriptions: Crypts, Lairs, & Sewers Edition", in conjunction with relevant items already identified in the separate Crushed Keep Environs Atlas map. The fungus names were randomly selected from fungal items on cards in the Downcrawl Encounter Deck, from the Downcrawl 2nd Edition RPG by Aaron A Reed.

Notes on the Complex

The main external access-route is by the rocky **Tunnel Down from the Surface Entrance**, which lies roughly 240 feet (75 metres) southwest of the southwestern map edge here. That Entrance is shown on the Crushed Keep Environs map. The Tunnel is irregular in shape, size and direction, but can be taken as roughly the same height as its width for most of its course, as can most of the other passageways in the complex, unless noted. Towards its inner end, a pale yellow glow can be seen faintly from around the final bend, before it opens out into the oval **Glow-Fungus Cave**. This Cave's ceiling is about 12 ft high (3.5 m), and there is an especially large, flattish rock slab on the floor towards the northern wall. In the centre of the floor is a circle of knee-high, yellow-glowing mushrooms, a type known descriptively as Shaggy Bells. Within this circle, and extending for a distance outside it (illustrated by the discoloured area on the map), the stone floor has been changed to damp clay by the action of the fungus. Probing this area, or damaging the fungi, will attract the attention of the Fey Stonemelder **Pebble Milly**, who occupies the nearby, yet unconnected, cave south of this one. She treats the Shaggy Bell ring as her doorbell. She looks like a crude sculpture of a classic garden gnome, and seems quite a simple creature to talk to, yet proud. She can magically shape stone at will. Fascinated by constructed materials such as cloth and paper, which she will happily accept as payment for her services, if irritated by visitors' behaviour, she will stalk the party thereafter, inconveniencing them at every opportunity - sealing passages, making pitfalls, encasing dropped or left items in stone, and so forth. If attacked, she simply retreats into the nearest stone surface, and will wait to seek revenge later, possibly by encasing her sleeping attacker in the stone floor, for example. In her Cave, aside from a rock-slab "bed" and boulder "chair", there are assorted scraps of paper and similar materials, as well as cloth, including a couple of very fine rolls of dyed silk, in heaps in the two main alcoves of her den. She often enters the Glow-Fungus Cave using the short dead-end passage nearest her Cave, although she may choose any other route instead.

The eastern passage out of the Glow-Fungus Cave opens into the smaller, approximately oval, **Ashmoth Cave**, which has five floor-to-ceiling rock pillars in it that make squeezing through here difficult for adult-Human-sized creatures, especially without brushing any of the pillars. The ceiling is around 10 ft high (3 m). Ashmoths are a kind of flying insect, also to be found in the woods outside the complex (usually only in twilight and at night there; they may be encountered in numbers using the long Tunnel Down from the Surface Entrance near dawn and dusk as well). They are roughly hand-sized, ashy-grey moths that blend-in at rest with the local rocks (and tree-trunks outside). When in flight, their bodies glow like fiery embers, and they magically absorb any fire they pass close to (within 10 feet, 3 m), dousing it instantly. If they land on a warm creature, they absorb some of its warmth and vitality as well (doing an amount of damage like a dagger, if an RPG-equivalent level is required). Clusters of them may be resting on each of the pillars at any time of day.

East from the Ashmoth Cave, the passage forks left to join the northeastern tunnel out of the Glow-Fungus Cave, and right into the bilobed, dead-end **Runestone Cave**. The ceiling in this Cave lowers to around eight feet (2.4 m) towards its enclosed inner end. On the floor partly in the right-side lobe alcove, is a huge, ancient, rune-carved stone. Just what its purpose and origins are is left for GMs to decide.

The first left-side branch off the tunnel northeast from Glow-Fungus Cave is blocked by boulders and rubble about halfway along it, although there is a narrow crawl-space passage through the blockage, towards the ceiling, a difficult squeeze for anyone other than small-sized creatures carrying little or no gear with them. This is **Scorpion Mike's Hideout**. The tunnel could be cleared of boulders to allow larger folks to pass, but that would take several hours of intensive effort (say 2d6 hours). Scorpion Mike is a Rockcrawler Goblin scorpion-wrangler. He often sits here checking, filling and feeding the scorpions in a range of fragile glass jars and bottles he keeps here, scattered about. If pressed, he will fling such bottles at intruders so they shatter, doing minor damage and releasing their scared and irritated scorpions in doing so. He can be persuaded to part with a jar or two of scorpions for a suitable small weapon, such as a decent-quality dagger, and if befriended, may even take visitors to where he traps and keeps the "wild" (that is, unbottled) scorpions in the Rainbow Cavern nearby. **Rockcrawler Goblins** are small humanoids with quite long arms and legs for their size, and spatulate finger- and toe-tips. These enable them to climb easily even vertical surfaces, or cling on to a ceiling while moving across it, much like geckos. They mostly live in tunnels far down in Rockcrawler

Chasm, only occasionally coming up to visit the mapped parts of Crushed Keep Caverns beyond Rainbow Cavern. Mike is one of the exceptions, as he comes nearer the surface regularly to collect fresh scorpions.

The next left-hand passage off the tunnel northeast from Glow-Fungus Cave has a right-angle bend in it, after which it dead-ends. Those familiar with Pebble Milly may detect signs that she has passed this way before, or seems to have done so, creating, then closing, a passageway to the Lens Cave. It is now solid rock again, however. The right-hand junction just after this opening leads south to Runestone and Ashmoth Caves, while further east, the tunnel has an increasingly irregular character, with several large side-alcoves, before finally narrowing to a dead end. This is the **Tunnel of Orange Crystals**, so called for the very obvious reason that chunks of glowing orange crystals jut out from the walls all along it. If broken-off, or chipped from the walls, these cease glowing immediately. If left alone, they provide a low-level of illumination all along this route, which glow is faintly visible (if no other light sources are present) as far west as the junction to Runestone and Ashmoth Caves. One patch of the crystals on the right-hand wall, roughly halfway along the Tunnel, has a redder glow than any of the others (labelled **Red** on the map). Touching this with living flesh causes the secret door to the Lobby in the wall almost opposite to pivot open into the Tunnel (hinged on the side furthest from this patch of red crystal).

Accessible only using this secret door from the Tunnel of Orange Crystals, is a connected suite of rooms, each with a 15 ft high ceiling (4.5 m). Each has a floor, ceiling and walls tiled with marble, with marble stone doors between the chambers. Except for the secret door (which is easily-located from inside), all the other doors in this suite are magically sealed, and everything inside is dried-up and brittle with age. The air smells stale and unused. The **Lobby** forms an impressive entry-room to the suite, with elaborately-decorated low-relief carvings of landscape scenes, not unlike those on the surface from this region, all around the walls. A central, low-walled, dry pool has a life-sized, cross-legged, seated Human figure holding a jar from which water no doubt formerly spouted, but which too is completely dried-up. Empty wall-brackets for torches are on all the walls, with rich, red velvet curtains covering the three doorways out. This fabric is liable to crumble and shred to dust if touched.

The Lobby's east door leads to the **Kitchen**, with another door immediately to the right once through it, into the small **Store**. Little remains usable in the Store, except perhaps some of the wood from the crate or barrel, as the sacking is apt to tear, spilling-out whatever dried and useless contents were in the sacks. The barrel is dry, although it seems to have once contained oil of some sort. The Kitchen is in a similar state, although its metal utensils and pottery items (including plates, bowls and mugs) could be reused once cleaned or resharpened, for instance. Perishables have, of course, perished. There is clear evidence the room was used both for ordinary culinary and dining purposes, and as an alchemical laboratory. There may even be a few still-viable potions and ingredients hidden away in one or other of the cupboards, requiring a lengthy search to find. There is a stove for both food and alchemical work on the northwest wall, with a chimney flue behind it that leads towards the surface, a long and difficult climb, notably at its top, which has been blocked and sealed by fallen stones. This might form another route into the Caverns complex from the surface, could it be located there, or back to the surface, with the blockage removed.

Opposite the Kitchen door across the Lobby is the door to the **Bedchamber**. This has wardrobes, desks, chairs, rugs and three beds, all once of an impressive richness, along with the desk and wardrobe contents, though all here is now as brittle and delicate with age as everything else in this area. On each bed lies the desiccated corpse of a wizard. No viable magic items remain here.

Last and much the largest of the rooms in this marble suite is the **Ritual Chamber**. An inactive ritual circle is engraved into the floor, with some sparse furniture including a table, two cupboards (still containing various ritual paraphernalia, papers and books - everything brittle and apt to crumble, as usual), an empty iron brazier, and a colourfully-decorated tall vase. Perhaps the most notable feature though is the large copper tree standing in the Chamber's north corner. This might be a model, but it seems more as if it were a once-living tree changed by some process to solid copper, due to the fine tracery of its twigs and bare roots. It has no leaves, and seems utterly out of place. It would take some effort to discover this, but the copper tree was once a magical harp, now transformed to this shape. If the floor circle here can be reactivated, it could be commanded to do one of three things. It could act as a magical teleport device to and from the surface ruins of Crushed Keep (the remains of an identically-shaped and aligned room can still be found there, complete with an identical, inactive, magic circle set in its floor). Alternatively it could be used to raise any nearby corpses, empowering them to kill intruders in the marble suite, although this would take around an hour after the circle's activation for it to take effect. Its third use could be to return someone dead less than a day back to life, by placing their body in the centre of the circle, and having five willing people stand equidistantly along the circle, each of whom has about half their lifeforce drained to power the effect, while the person in the centre is fully restored to life.

North from Scorpion Mike's Hideout is a tunnel crossway. The eastern tunnel widens into the **Lens Cave** after a short distance. This oval cavern is formed in a hollow, lens-like shape, with concave floor and ceiling once inside, as has the latter stages of the tunnel leading in. The central ceiling-floor separation in the Cave is roughly 16 ft (4.8 m), and the curving, hollowed floor is quite tricky to walk across. Although the Cave appears nothing more than another dead-end, near the northern corner is a boulder-sealed wall, so cunningly fashioned it seems simply to be part of the wall there, and is classed as a very hard-to-find secret door. Once

located, it could only be opened after hours of work (say 3d6), as it is not a physical door as such, simply a collection of neatly-fitted large rocks. Beyond it is a long tunnel that slopes quite sharply down, with a pale blue glow apparent from the cave of **Sleeping Warriors** at its foot. The profile of this cave and its entryway tunnel as mapped is like a carnyx, which is not accidental. Fourteen identically-armed and armoured Lizardfolk warriors lie as if asleep, in magical stasis here, preserved by the steady blue glow of ancient magical glyphs engraved deeply into the rock column at the cave's far end. Additional inscriptions on the rock column indicate they will be awoken one day by a Chosen One, when the land is in its greatest need of them. Each warrior has a small blue-stone model of a giant riding lizard in a belt pouch. When they awaken, these can be commanded to become actual giant riding lizards, so the group will appear as knightly cavalry.

The northern tunnel beyond Scorpion Mike's Hideout opens out into Rainbow Cavern, while the western tunnel also does so, after a longer, winding way. This western tunnel has a long opening in its south wall, where a subterranean stream flows swiftly from west to east, descending in a vertical chute and waterfall at its eastern end. There are rapids upstream on the map to the west as well, and the stream originates a long way further west of this map. It was once part of the watercourse that fed the great waterfall in the southwest wall of Rainbow Cavern, now diverted into this more southerly, far less impressive, route.

Both routes northwest from the earlier part of the complex lead into the southeastern side of **Rainbow or Lost Bridge Cavern**, onto a platform suspended above the great **Rockcrawler Chasm**, a vast, lightless, uncertainly deep, pit. The platforms over the chasm are solid as rock to walk upon, but have a springy, moss-like outer surface thanks to the moss-like Honey-Fungus (so named from its yellow to golden-brown coloration) that grows all across it. The platforms are not rock, but are made from solidified Pearl Spider Gel, spun out across the Chasm from the walls and side tunnels by the semi-domesticated Pearl Spiders of the Rockcrawler Goblins. These are not strictly spiders, as they have rudimentary wings that allow them to fly somewhat clumsily, although they are much more adept at climbing rocky surfaces, with a similar ability to the Rockcrawler Goblins in this respect. Pearl Spiders are roughly Human-child-sized insectoid creatures with spiky, chitinous limbs. They have iridescent carapaces, the colours and nature of which would ensure good prices in the right places were they to be harvested. They secrete a colourless to pale yellow gel that they can spin into webs and solid surfaces, which slowly hardens in air to a rock-like solidity. The gel gives off a soft, yellow glow while still liquid. It can be kept in this viscous liquid state by regular agitation. The Goblins harvest some and keep it in pools, such as that on the larger of the two northwestern Chasm platforms. In its liquid state, the gel will readily attach to any solid surface. The Goblins also harvest the Spiders' eggs, which they consider a great delicacy, although that takes place in the depths far below, where the immobile, Ogre-sized Pearl Spider Queen resides, whose life consists of little more than eating and laying eggs. The smaller of the two northwestern platforms has a high ring of stones to help keep-in the scorpions Scorpion Mike collects here. Originally, a great subterranean river flowed in from high on the southwestern wall into the Chasm, and a double rock bridge spanned it from southeast to northwest, magically lighting the Cavern, the bridges attached where the tunnels now start and end on either side of the Chasm. It was then a place of beauty and wonder, as some old tales still relate. Now, the whole tunnel the river used to enter by has completely collapsed, the watercourse split and diverted elsewhere, bypassing this whole area, making it a largely dark and dismal place, and the bridges have long since fallen into the depths in fragments. The ceiling over the central Chasm is around 30 ft (9 m) above the level of the side tunnels and Chasm platforms. Typically small numbers of Rockcrawler Goblins and Pearl Spiders may be in the mapped area of Rainbow Cavern at any given time, more of the Goblins if there has been any significant noise or disturbance in the complex. The Spiders tend to retreat from danger, as indeed will the Goblins if seriously threatened.

Northwest beyond the Chasm, both short tunnels slope down towards **Lighteater Pool Cavern**, another large cave, with a roughly 20 ft high (6 m) central roof. Its floor is filled with an extensive freshwater Pool, with five side-tunnels and alcoves off it. In the middle of the Pool is a strangely regular, low island. The Pool is surprisingly deep, in what seems to be a rocky tube, as the banks drop sheer for at least 40 ft (12 m) on all sides, and around the island's shores. Patches of pale green light can be seen on the walls around the Pool and in the alcoves and passages leading from it, emanating from clumps of low-growing Burning Star fungi. Every now and then, one or other fungus patch will release a globe of green witchlight that drifts lazily out over the Pool, as if in a gentle breeze, before dipping down and extinguishing in it. These magical lights and the glowing fungi prevent any kind of magical movement in this Cavern - no flight, teleportation or dimensional transport, for example. Up close, it is clear **Pentacle Isle** has had its original form modified artificially into the shape of a pentagon, and its surface flattened. Lines making angular rings and a central five-pointed star design have been carved into the Isle's surface, all filled with compacted powdered bone. A low, flat, rock has been placed by each point of the star design, between the two bone-ring pentagons, with a larger flat boulder between two of the inner star arms, like an altar stone. Small items, such as bottles, candle-holders and a bowl have been left on these flat stones, although all have stood here for long ages, judging by the dust gathered on them. In the centre of the pentacle design is an 8 ft (2.4 m) pillar made of skulls. When by or on the Isle, these can be heard constantly whispering, and they can be persuaded to tell secrets and details of ritual chants useful in ceremonies here. Gaps and holes in the pillar, including the eye sockets in the skulls, have been filled with glow fungus, which stays only in the gaps and sockets without spilling out, or releasing any witchlight globes. The pale green radiance may be rather unnerving for sensitive types.