



DEATHDUSK PASSAGE

4 Difficulty
4 Complexity

A short delve for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

Deathdusk Passage is a collection of three short encounters designed for five players of 1st to 3rd level, taking place in an ominous underground tunnel that connects any two locations of your campaign.

After entering the tunnel, the adventurers will become trapped in a hallway where they must fight off oozes and attempt to escape. Next, they will discover a dangerously deep pit; while attempting to cross, monstrous bats will descend upon them and attack. Finally, as they near the exit, statues surrounding an ancient gate come to life, attacking the players as they try to make their escape.

BACKGROUND

Appearing at first glance to be the entrance to an ornate, stone crypt, the Deathdusk passage has existed for centuries as a shortcut for those willing to brave its darkness. Its craftsmanship is of dwarven origin—no other stonework would have endured so long—though the purpose of its construction remains a mystery.

Just inside, stairs descend into the darkness, masking the presence of hungry monsters, just waiting for a party of inexperienced adventurers. What lies beyond the entrance is uncertain; few have seen and survived the dangers of Deathdusk passage, and they refuse to speak of what lies below. But even without credibility, stories surrounding the passage are plentiful. Tales of endless pits, deadly traps, and forsaken travelers, now waiting in the deep to embrace new adventurers and pull them into the dark.

Whether from fear of such stories, or just simple superstitions, most people ignore the passage entirely, choosing instead to follow the slow and winding mountain trail to their destination. Such a choice is wise, and those who make it nearly always reach their destination unscathed; those that enter Deathdusk passage, on the other hand, are more likely to disappear than reach the other side. Most sneer at the few who dare to attempt the tunnel and lose their lives, but to some, those brave, adventurous few—the journey itself has always meant more than the destination.

USING THE DELVE

Deathdusk Passage is designed to provide an exciting one-shot adventure for players traveling to another location. The entrance and exit of the tunnel can begin and end wherever you desire. The encounters each represent a different area of the passage, which could contain countless other encounters and mysteries. You could even use this delve as an entrance to the Underdark, Undermountain, or another dungeon of your choosing. Your players could be looking for a shortcut and decide to brave the passage, need to retrieve something from within, or simply stumble upon it—there is no more story necessary.

Encounter 1: *The Tunnel*

The PCs are trapped in a tunnel, where they must fend off monstrous oozes as they try to escape. (Level 2: 625 XP)

Encounter 2: *The Pit*

The PCs encounter a large pit, and must cross over it while attacked by a group of bloodthirsty bats. (Level 2: 650 XP)

Encounter 3: *The Gate*

Guarding the exit of the passage is a gate surrounded by several stone statues, which awaken and attack. (Level 3: 700 XP)

All of the monster stat blocks are located on page 6.

USING THE MAPS

There are a few different maps that you can cut out and use; each map is labeled for its specific encounter:

Encounter 1: *The Tunnel*

Maps: M1a, M1b (pages 7-8)

Encounter 2: *The Pit*

Maps: M2a, M2b (pages 9-10)

Encounter 3: *The Gate*

Maps: M3a, M3b, M3c, M3d (pages 11-14)

ENCOUNTER 1: THE TUNNEL

Encounter Level 2 (625 XP)

After the players have been traveling for a short while, they enter a smaller tunnel with several holes in the walls. Stone doors seal them in at both entrances, and oozes begin to spill into the room. The doors are immovable and too thick to destroy, but can be opened by defeating oozes within the room.

SETUP

5 Pale Green Oozes (O)

When the adventurers enter the area, read:

The tunnel begins to shake violently as two stone walls quickly drop from the ceiling, barring each entrance. The floor is littered with bones of varying shapes and sizes, though all cleanly stripped of any flesh.

A sickening sound of slurps and gulps emerges from the holes in the bottom of the tunnel, followed shortly by several pale green oozes, which creep slowly and hungrily toward you.

Perception (DC 10): The stone doors glow with a pale green luminosity, strikingly similar to the color of the oozes.

Perception (DC 12): Written on the doors in ancient dwarven is a clue: "Passage is paid in blood—foot by foot, ooze by ooze."

When an ooze dies, read:

As the ooze dissipates into nothing, sizzling on the stone below your feet, you hear a loud scrape—stone on stone. Both doors slowly open a short way, stopping approximately six inches above the previous spot.

TACTICS

The pale green oozes are mindless and will try to mob the closest players, using *Flesh Melt* against their target and *Melting Spray* when it will hit more than one player. They use *Slimy* as often as possible, trying to surround a player and gain combat advantage.

When an ooze dies, another one appears at the farthest hold and is put into the initiative order immediately. Once a player has left the hallway, the oozes will not follow unless the player attacks them again after leaving.

ESCAPING THE TRAP

The players need to kill the oozes to open the stone doors and leave the room:

- The door will raise 6 inches each time an ooze is killed.
- Once all of the players have left the room, the doors will open all the way and the oozes will return to their holes.
- The oozes are endless, and will keep appearing and engaging as long as a PC remains in the room.
- The trap reactivates if the PCs enter the room again.
- The PCs do not receive XP for any ooze after the sixth.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. The doors glow with a pale green light, which barely illuminates the room.

Holes: Marked as black holes in the wall; the oozes emerge from here.

Stone doors: Marked as stone doors with green runes, there is a magical seal on them preventing damage and opening rituals. There is no handle or hinge, or lock to pick.

Bone Piles: Marked as piles of white bones, these squares count as difficult terrain for players, but not oozes.



ENCOUNTER 2: THE PIT

Encounter Level 2 (650 XP)

The players will encounter a steep set of stairs, which opens into a wide, natural cave. An enormous pit stretches across the room from wall to wall. The dwarven architecture is still visible, but only as two narrow stone bridges crossing the pit. Once the players have stepped onto the bridge, bats will attack from above.

SETUP

3 Blood-tinged Bats (B)

8 Starving Bats (S)

When the adventurers step onto the bridge, read:

The bridge is solid, and shows almost no signs of erosion or decay. Above is a natural cave ceiling populated with stalactites. A putrid stench hangs in the air—the scent of excrement. Scattered along the bridge are many torches, placed in sconces. Only a couple are lit.

Perception (DC 8): Written on the bridge, over and over again, in common, dwarven, and elven: “Death below and death above.”

Perception (DC 12): You notice several glowing eyes flashing between the stalagmites above.

When the bats attack, read:

A deafening screech echoes across the open space of the cavern and pit, and you hear the familiar flapping of leathery wings. More screeches join in, creating a cacophony of overwhelming screams.

TACTICS

The starving bats will work together in groups of 2 or 3 to attack players with *Bite* and their *Flyby Attack*, trying to avoid being hit by opportunity attacks when possible. After attacking, they will attempt to hide in the darkness of the ceiling.

The blood-tinged bats are more aggressive, though they will prefer to use *Bloodthirsty Strike* over *Slash*, targeting vulnerable or lonely PCs.

The bats will hang from the ceiling between attacks, hiding in dark areas if possible for concealment.

FIGHTING ON THE BRIDGE

Bridges are dangerous places to fight, so to help your PCs:

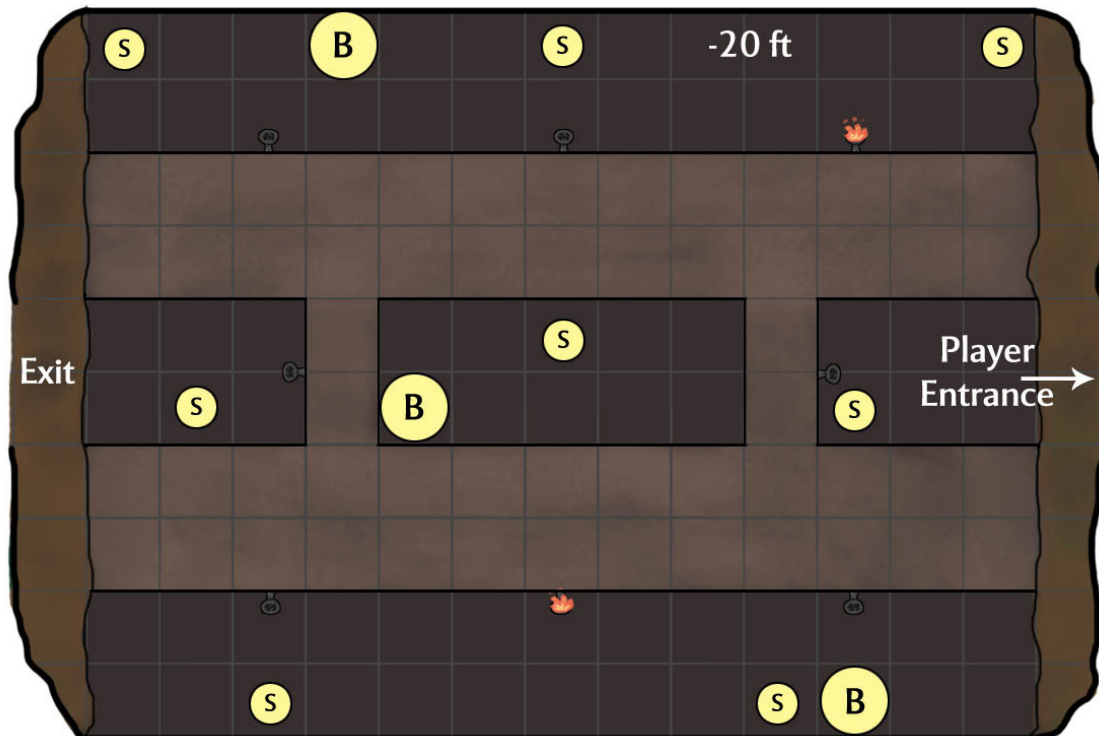
- A PC that falls off the bridge can grab onto the side with a **DC 8 Athletics** check. A PC can pull up another PC with a standard action and a **DC 8 Athletics** check.
- If a PC still manages to fall, they land in a shallow pool of water 20 ft below, and suffer **2d6** damage. There is a stone ladder they can use to climb back up to the top.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. Two of the torches are already lit, but if extinguished the room will return to darkness.

Sconces: Marked as little torches, these can be lit by players. A lit torch provides light in an area burst 1.

Ceiling: The cave ceiling is 10 ft above the bridge, and bats hanging there can be hit. If a bat is not in a square lit by a torch or PC ability, it gains total concealment.



ENCOUNTER 3: THE GATE

Encounter Level 3 (700 XP)

The players will begin to ascend flights of stairs, indicating that the passage is nearing its end at the surface level. The stairs lead into a large domed room, with an enormous stone gate at the other end. Statues flanking the gate will come alive and attack the players as they come near.

SETUP

- 2 Jade Statues (J)
- 2 Citrine Statues (C)

When the adventurers near the gate, read:

Before you lies a massive stone gate with four pillars, inscribed with glowing runes that alternate in color of orange and green. Through the gate, you can see the faintest glimpse of what appears to be sunlight, trickling through beneath the ornately-carved door.

Flanking the gate are large statues—two green, two orange—each made in the image of an oversized dwarf, all inscribed with glowing runes and gemstones. As you come near, the statues begin to shake and move, littering the floor with small pebbles and rocks as they rise to a standing position.

In perfect unison, the statues open their mouths, and in a slow, monotonous voice, address you: “None shall pass.”

Perception (DC 10): *The orange and green runes on each statue pulse in sync with the corresponding color on the gate.*

Perception (DC 12): *As the constructs come to life, a chip falls off the shoulder of a jade statue. Seconds later, a stone chip of the same size breaks off of one of the jade pillars, falling to the ground.*

Perception (DC 16): *The floor is littered with several piles of stone pieces, covered in dust. A closer look reveals broken statues, their runes barely visible, strikingly similar to the ones near the gate.*

When a player damages a statue, read:

As you strike the construct, a strange green [or orange] energy arcs from the statue to your weapon. While imbued with this energy, you feel a magical force repelling your weapon from the target—the statue seems to have a temporary resistance from further attacks as long as your weapon carries this statue’s power.

When a statue is destroyed, read:

As the statue crumbles and falls to the ground, a pillar adorned with runes of the same color cracks, collapsing as the lighted runes fade.

When the last statue is destroyed, read:

As the last statue begins to crack, it pauses and addresses you in a slow, emotionless tone, slowly fading into quiet: “The masters find you worthy; your passage is welcomed.”

The gate itself begins to slide upwards, revealing a staircase to the surface. You feel a rush of fresh air as the chamber opens, granting



TACTICS

The jade statues will move into the party attacking players with *Smashing Fist* and *Crushing Blow*, trying to push them into other statues for the extra damage from *Steady* and *Stomp*.

The citrine statues will hang back, using *Hurled Stone* and taking advantage of *Easy Target* when possible. They will also attempt to push players into the statues, attempting to trigger *Steady* and knock players prone.

OPENING THE GATE

The players need to kill the four statues to destroy the pillars and open the gate, which leads out of the passage.

- When a PC lands a hit on a jade statue, the PC's next attack deals half damage to jade statues, but gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll against a citrine statue, and deals an additional 1d6 damage.
- When a PC lands a hit on a citrine statue, the PC's next attack deals half damage to citrine statues, but gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll against a jade statue, and deals an additional 1d6 damage.
- When a statue is destroyed, one of the stone pillars (of corresponding color) of the gate will collapse. Only after all four have been destroyed will the gate crumble and allow the players to exit the passage.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. The statues and walls are covered with bright runes, which function as a dull light source.

Elevation: The area surrounding the gate is 10' higher than the rest of the room, colored darker to indicate.

Piles of Stone: Marked as broken statues on the ground, these

CONCLUSION

The encounters of *Deathdusk Passage* are trials put in place by the dwarven makers. Once someone survives the tunnel and all of the puzzles and mysteries within, they are free to pass through in the future without incident, as long as everyone present has already proved themselves.

Now, when entering *Deathdusk passage*, magical torches automatically burst into flames to guide the way, no traps trigger, and each door opens as they approach it—the tunnel itself recognizes the players.

Others should take note of their accomplishment, and many will be curious of what lies within the tunnel. Whether or not the players decide to reveal the secrets is up to them.

TREASURE

Allow the players to find several treasure parcels along their journey. Here are some ideas:

- Outside of the first encounter area is a corpse with decaying flesh, which survived the room but died shortly after. Nearby is a level 4 magical weapon and 200 gp.
- In the water below the stone bridge is an adventuring sack dropped by another party. Inside is a level 3 magical item and 150 gp.
- Several pieces from the jade and citrine statues are valuable gems, worth 300 gp.

EXPANDING THE DELVE

To turn this delve into a longer adventure, consider these additions:

- Navigating part of the passage could involve a skill challenge, with the players needing to decipher directions, find a way to open a magical door, or disabling a trap.
- There's no reason that *Deathdusk passage* should have to be a linear tunnel—perhaps there are several other routes filled with centipedes, undead ghosts of early adventurers, or descendants of the original dwarven makers.
- Maybe *Deathdusk passage* isn't a passage at all, but the entrance to an entire dungeon beneath the mountain. Both sides of the tunnel could meet in the middle, where a secret door gives entry to the mysteries below.

ADJUSTMENTS

We have too few or too many players:

All of the monsters are generic and nonessential to the stories, reduce or increase the number to match the corresponding XP budget for each encounter.

It's too easy or too hard:

Increase or decrease the number of monsters in each encounter, as well as the number of oozes required to open the door, the number of powerful bats on the bridge, and the frequency with which the statues use their powerful attacks.

I want to steal some of these ideas:

All yours! Use anything you'd like for your own campaign.



MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Encounter 1: The Tunnel

Pale Green Ooze		Level 2 Brute
Small natural beast (blind, ooze)		XP 125
Initiative +0	Senses Perception +2; blindsight, tremorsense	
Stench aura 2; each enemy within the aura takes 2 damage at the start of its turn		
HP 50; Bloodied 25		
AC 12; Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 14		
Immune gaze; Resist 5 acid		
Speed 4, Climb 3		
⊕ Flesh Melt (standard; at-will) • Acid		
+3 vs Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 acid damage, and the target is shifted 1 square		
← Melting Spray (standard; recharge [3][3])		
Close blast 2; targets enemies; +3 vs Fortitude; 1d4 + 5 acid damage.		
Slimy (minor; at-will)		
The pale green ooze shifts 1 square.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 11	Dex 9	Wis 11
Con 25	Int 1	Cha 1

Encounter 2: The Pit

Blood-tinged Bat		Level 3 Lurker
Medium natural beast		XP 150
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 38; Bloodied 19		
AC 16; Fortitude 14, Reflex 17, Will 12		
Speed 2, Fly 8		
⊕ Slash (standard; at-will)		
+7 vs AC; 1d6 + 4 damage. In darkness, the blood-tinged bat gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deals an additional 5 damage.		
↓ Bloodthirsty Strike (standard; at-will)		
The blood-tinged bat flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. If the attack is successful, the bat regains 5 hit points. The bat does not provoke an opportunity attack from its target, but does provoke them from other creatures.		
Perseverance		
When the blood-tinged bat scores a critical hit, the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 13	Dex 18	Wis 13
Con 14	Int 2	Cha 11

Starving Bat		Level 1 Minion
Small natural beast		XP 25
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 13; Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 13		
Speed 1, Fly 6		
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will)		
+6 vs AC; 4 damage.		
↓ Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)		
The starving bat flies up to 6 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. If the attack is successful, the bat regains 5 hit points. The bat does not provoke an opportunity attack from its target, but does provoke them from other creatures.		
Perseverance		
When the starving bat scores a critical hit, the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 8	Dex 15	Wis 12
Con 10	Int 2	Cha 6

Encounter 3: The Gate

Citrine Statue		Level 4 Artillery
Large magical animate (construct)		XP 175
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 38; Bloodied 19		
AC 17; Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 16		
Resist charm, fear, poison, sleep		
Speed 5		
⊕ Smashing Fist (standard; at-will)		
+10 vs AC; 2d4 + 4 damage and the target is pushed 1 square		
➤ Hurled Stone (standard; at-will)		
Ranged 10; +8 vs Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.		
Easy Target		
If the citrine statue is targeting a prone enemy, it gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deals an additional 1d6 damage.		
Steady		
The citrine statue cannot be pushed, pulled, or slid. If an enemy is pushed into the citrine statue, the enemy takes 1d6 damage and is knocked prone.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 17	Dex 19	Wis 12
Con 8	Int 6	Cha 9

Jade Statue		Level 4 Brute
Large magical animate (construct)		XP 175
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 48; Bloodied 24		
AC 18; Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 16		
Resist charm, fear, poison, sleep		
Speed 5		
⊕ Smashing Fist (standard; at-will)		
+8 vs AC; 2d8 + 4 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.		
↓ Crushing Blow (standard; at-will)		
+7 vs Fortitude; 2d8 + 4 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.		
Stomp		
If adjacent to a prone enemy at the start of its turn, the jade statue may make a smashing fist attack against that enemy as a free action.		
Steady		
The jade statue cannot be pushed, pulled, or slid. If an enemy is pushed into a jade statue, the enemy takes 1d6 damage and is knocked prone.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 17	Dex 19	Wis 12
Con 8	Int 6	Cha 9