

UNDERDARK OUTPOSTS

Characters can clear out Underdark areas and create defensible outposts where they and their followers can store supplies and take refuge. To ensure that an outpost isn't overrun and looted, guards must be assigned to the outpost while the characters are away.

Outposts not only allow scouts to easily backtrack through the Underdark, carrying messages and information to the characters' allies, but also allow additional supplies and reinforcements to reach the expeditionary force with relative ease. Characters without outposts must rely on magic to send messages or receive supplies and reinforcements once their expeditionary force is more than a tenday's travel away from Mantol-Derith.

NEW DOWNTIME ACTIVITY: ESTABLISH AN OUTPOST

Establishing an Underdark outpost is a new downtime activity available to characters in this adventure. An outpost requires a total of 150 hours of work to build, assuming its location is clear of creatures and hazards. Multiple characters can combine their efforts to reduce the completion time.

Each Underdark outpost is basically a fortified encampment. It can take one of the following forms:

- A small cave, roughly 20 feet square, with one or more gated or barricaded exits
- A walled compound, up to 20 feet square, within a much larger cavern
- A island with boats or rafts
- A hard-to-reach ledge, pinnacle, or promontory accessed by ladders and/or ropes

RETRACING STEPS

This section addresses what happens if the characters visit places they skipped during their escape from the Underdark, and what might have changed or shifted in their absence.

BLINGDENSTONE

If the adventurers encountered the Pudding King and uncovered evidence of Juiblex's presence near Blingdenstone, they might want to return there to confirm that the svirfneblin settlement remains safe from the demon lord's influence.

Alternatively, if the characters didn't previously visit Blingdenstone, news of the challenges faced by the deep gnomes can reach them while they travel through the Underdark. Deep gnome merchants headed to Mantol-Derith bring word of oozes infesting the settlement, giving the characters an opportunity to face off against the Pudding King.

At some point after the Pudding King is dealt with, Juiblex and its servants make their way toward the caverns of Araumykos to crash Zuggtmoy's wedding (see chapter 16, "The Fetid Wedding"). If the Pudding King is among the survivors, he leads the mad march to confront Zuggtmoy and her fungal followers.

REINFORCEMENTS

The deep gnomes of Blingdenstone are valuable allies. In gratitude for the adventurers' aid, they offer to reinforce the party's expeditionary force with twelve **deep gnomes**. Chief Dorbo Diggermattock can also be persuaded to lend additional aid and troops, if the heroes present a compelling case. Use the information in chapter 6 to guide any negotiations or arrangements the adventurers attempt to make with the svirfneblin.

THE DARKLAKE

To move their expeditionary force across the Darklake, the characters must build rafts or coracles from Underdark materials, or seek out duergar or kuo-toa ferries for hire. Each ferry they find can transport up to eight members of the expeditionary force.

Chapter 3 contains information on navigating the Darklake. If the expeditionary force splits up, check for random encounters with each group separately.

FALLEN SLOOBLUDOP

If the characters visit Sloobludop, they find the kuo-toa community in ruins. Demogorgon smashed and crushed many of the structures of the settlement, killing about half the kuo-toa community in the process. The survivors have fallen prey to madness and the predations of Underdark monsters in the time since.

Obscene altars and shrines are everywhere, many of them depicting elements of Demogorgon's twisted iconography—spirals and "Y" shapes, two-headed creatures, manta rays, and tentacles. Other shrines show the influence of other demon lords, including piles of skulls and bones, strange maze patterns, spore clouds, and fetid pools of ooze. Conflicts are rapidly rising between the various "sects" that have formed.

If Shuushar the Awakened (see chapter 1) was not killed in a previous chapter of the adventure, the characters find him among Sloobludop's survivors. He is the sole point of calm and reason in the ruined settlement, and the various factions of the kuo-toa show him respect. Shuushar mediates disputes between the kuo-toa and supervises the allocation of their dwindling resources. Even so, the kuo-toa monk isn't sure how long he can sustain his people and keep them from destruction.

GRACKLSTUGH

If the characters visited Gracklstugh previously, the duergar response to their return is dictated by the gray dwarves' prior experience with the characters. The duergar are cautious—if not downright alarmed—at the sight of an armed expeditionary force from the surface world at their gates. They likely refuse entry to the full party, allowing only a select few characters into the Darklake District. Invisible duergar guards keep watch on characters in the city at all times, and might even infiltrate the expeditionary force, attempting to eavesdrop on conversations to learn the adventurers' intentions.